Best Laid Plans
by
Sidney Sheldon

Books by Sidney Sheldon

IF TOMORROW COMES

MASTER OF THE GAME

RAGE OF ANGELS

BLOODLINE

A STRANGER IN THE MIRROR THE OTHER SIDE OF MIDNIGHT

THE NAKED FACE WINDMILLS OF THE GODS

THE SANDS OF TIME

MEMORIES OF MIDNIGHT

THE DOOMSDAY CONSPIRACY

THE STARS SHINE DOWN

NOTHING LASTS FOREVER

MORNING, NOON & NIGHT

SIDNEY SHELDON

THE

BEST LAID PLANS

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names, characters and modems portrayed in it are the work of the
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my appreciation

THE

BEST LAID PLANS

One.

The first entry in Leslie Stewart's diary read:

Dear Diary: This morning I met the man I am going to marry.

It was a simple, optimistic statement, with not the slightest portent
of the dramatic chain of events that was about to occur.

It was one of those rare, serendipitous days when nothing

could go
wrong, when nothing would dare go wrong. Leslie Stewart had no
interest in astrology, but that morning, as she was leafing through the
Lexington Herald-Leader, a horoscope in an astrology column by Zoltaire
caught her eye. It read:

FOR LEO (JULY 23RD TO AUGUST 22ND). THE NEW

MOON ILLUMINATES YOUR LOVE LIFE. YOU ARE IN YOUR LUNAR CYCLE HIGH
NOW,

AND MUST PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO AN EXCITING NEW EVENT IN YOUR LIFE.

YOUR COMPATIBLE SIGN IS ViRGO. TODAY WILL BE A RED-LETTER DAY. BE

PREPARED TO ENJOY IT.

Be prepared to enjoy what? Leslie thought wryly. Today was going to
be like every other day. Astrology was nonsense, mind candy for
fools.

Leslie Stewart was a public relations and advertising executive at the
Lexington, Kentucky, firm of Bailey & Tomkins. She had three meetings
scheduled for that afternoon, the first with the Kentucky Fertilizer
Company, whose executives were excited about the new campaign she was
working up for them. They especially liked its beginning: "If you want
to smell the roses...." The second meeting was with the Breeders Stud
Farm, and the third with the Lexington Coal Company.
Red-letter day?

In her late twenties, with a slim, provocative figure, Leslie Stewart
had an exciting, exotic look; gray, sloe eyes, high cheekbones, and
soft, honey-colored hair, which she wore long and elegantly simple. A
friend of Leslie's had once told her,

"If you're beautiful and have a brain and a vagina, you can own the
world." Leslie Stewart was beautiful and had an IQ of 170, and nature
had taken care of the rest. But she found her looks a disadvantage.
Men were constantly pro positioning her or proposing, but few of them
bothered to try really to get to know her. Aside from the two
secretaries who worked at Bailey & Tomkins, Leslie was the only woman
there. There were fifteen male employees. It had taken Leslie less
than a week to learn that she was more intelligent than any of them. It
was a discovery she decided to keep to herself. In the beginning, both
partners, Jim Bailey, an overweight, soft-spoken man in his forties,
and Al Tomkins, anorexic and hyper, ten years younger than Bailey,
individually tried to talk Leslie into going to bed with them. She had
stopped them very simply. "Ask me once more, and I'll quit." That had
put an end to that. Leslie was too valuable an employee to lose. Her
first week on the job, during a coffee break, Leslie had told her
fellow employees a joke. "Three men came across a female genie who
promised to grant each one a wish. The first man said, "I wish I were
twenty-five percent smarter." The genie blinked, and the man said,

"Hey, I feel smarter already." "The second man said, "I wish I were
fifty percent smarter." The genie blinked, and the man exclaimed,
"That's wonderful! I think I know things now that I didn't know
before."

"The third man said, "I'd like to be one hundred percent smarter."

"So the genie blinked, and the man changed into a woman."

Leslie looked expectantly at the men at the table. They were all
staring at her, unamused.

Point taken.

The red-letter day that the astrologer had promised began at eleven
o'clock that morning. Jim Bailey walked into Leslie's tiny, cramped
office. "We have a new client," he announced. "I want you to take
charge." She was already handling more accounts than anyone else at
the firm, but she knew better than to protest. "Fine," she said.
"What is it?" "It's not a what, it's a who. You've heard of Oliver
Russell, of course?" Everyone had heard of Oliver Russell. A local
attorney and candidate for governor, he had his face on billboards all
over Kentucky. With his brilliant legal record, he was considered, at
thirty-five, the most eligible bachelor in the state. He was on all
the talk shows on the major television stations in Lexington WDKY,
WTVQ, WKYT and on the popular local radio stations, WKQQ and WLRO.
Strikingly handsome, with black,

unruly hair, dark eyes, an athletic build, and a warm smile, he had the
reputation of having slept with most of the ladies in Lexington.

"Yes, I've heard of him. What are we going to do for him?"

"We're going to try to help turn him into the governor of Kentucky.
He's on his way here now."

Oliver Russell arrived a few minutes later. He was even more
attractive in person than in his photographs. When he was introduced
to Leslie, he smiled warmly. "I've heard a lot about you. I'm so glad
you're going to handle my campaign." He was not at all what Leslie had
expected. There was a completely disarming sincerity about the man.
For a moment, Leslie was at a loss for words. "I thank you. Please
sit down." Oliver Russell took a seat. "Let's start at the
beginning," Leslie suggested. "Why are you running for governor?"
"It's very simple. Kentucky's a wonderful state. We know it is,
because we live here, and we're able to enjoy its magic but much of the
country thinks of us as a bunch of hillbillies. I want to change that
image. Kentucky has more to offer than a dozen other states combined.
The history of this country began here. We have one of the oldest
capitol buildings in America. Kentucky gave this country two
presidents. It's the land of

Daniel Boone and Kit Carson and Judge Roy Bean. We have

the most
beautiful scenery in the world exciting caves, rivers,
bluegrass fields
everything. I want to open all that up to the rest of the
world."

He spoke with a deep conviction, and Leslie found herself
strongly
drawn to him. She thought of the astrology column. "The
new moon
illuminates your love life. Today will be a red-letter
day. Be
prepared to enjoy it."

Oliver Russell was saying, "The campaign won't work unless
you believe
in this as strongly as I do."

"I do," Leslie said quickly. Too quickly? "I'm really
looking forward
to this." She hesitated a moment. "May I ask you a
question?"

"Certainly."

"What's your birth sign?"

"Virgo."

After Oliver Russell left, Leslie went into Jim Bailey's
office. "I
like him," she said. "He's sincere. He really cares. I
think he'd
make a fine governor." Jim looked at her thoughtfully.
"It's not
going to be easy." She looked at him, puzzled. "Oh?
Why?" Bailey
shrugged. "I'm not sure. There's something going on that
I can't
explain. You've seen Russell on all the billboards and on
television?"
"Yes." '.f

"Well, that's stopped." "I don't understand. Why?" "No

one knows for
certain, but there are a lot of strange rumors. One of
the rumors is
that someone was backing Russell, putting up all the money
for his
campaign, and then for some reason suddenly dropped him."
"In the
middle of a campaign he was winning? That doesn't make
sense, Jim."
"I know." "Why did he come to us?" "He really wants
this. I think
he's ambitious. And he feels he can make a difference.
He would like
us to figure out a campaign that won't cost him a lot of
money. He
can't afford to buy any more airtime or do much
advertising. All we
can really do for him is to arrange interviews, plant
newspaper
articles, that sort of thing." He shook his head.
"Governor Addison
is spending a fortune on his campaign. In the last two
weeks,
Russell's gone way down in the polls. It's a shame. He's
a good
lawyer. Does a lot of pro bono work. I think he'd make a
good
governor, too." That night Leslie made her first note in
her new
diary. Dear Diary: This morning I met the man I am going
to marry.
Leslie Stewart's early childhood was idyllic. She was an
extraordinarily intelligent child. Her father was an
English professor
at Lexington Community College and her mother was a
housewife.
Leslie's father was a handsome man, patrician and
intellectual. He was
a caring father, and he saw to it that the family took
their vacations
together and traveled together. Her father adored her.
"You're Daddy's
girl," he would say. He would tell her how beautiful she
looked and

compliment her on her grades, her behavior, her friends. Leslie could
do no wrong in his eyes. For her ninth birthday, her father bought her
a beautiful brown velvet dress with lace cuffs. He would have her put
the dress on, and he would show her off to his friends when they came
to dinner. "Isn't she a beauty?" he would say. Leslie worshiped him.
One morning, a year later, in a split second, Leslie's wonderful life
vanished. Her mother, face stained with tears, sat her down.
"Darling, your father has ... left us." Leslie did not understand at
first. "When will he be back?" "He's not coming back." And each word
was a sharp knife. My mother has driven him away, Leslie thought. She
felt sorry for her mother because now there would be a divorce and a
custody fight. Her father would never let her go. Never. He'll come
for me, Leslie told herself. But weeks passed, and her father never
called. They won't let him come and see me, Leslie decided. Mother's
punishing him. It was Leslie's elderly aunt who explained to the child
that there would be no custody battle. Leslie's father had fallen in
love with a widow who taught at the university and had moved in with
her, in her house on Limestone Street.

One day when they were out shopping, Leslie's mother pointed out the
house. "That's where they live," she said bitterly.

Leslie resolved to visit her father. When he sees me, she thought,
he'll want to come home.

On a Friday, after school, Leslie went to the house on
Limestone Street
and rang the doorbell. The door was opened by a girl
Leslie's age. She
was wearing a brown velvet dress with lace cuffs. Leslie
stared at
her, in shock.

The little girl was looking at her curiously. "Who are
you?"

Leslie fled.

Over the next year, Leslie watched her mother retire into
herself. She
had lost all interest in life. Leslie had believed that
"dying of a
broken heart" was an empty phrase, but Leslie helplessly
watched her
mother fade away and die, and when people asked her what
her mother had
died of, Leslie answered, "She died of a broken heart."
And Leslie
resolved that no man would ever do that to her. After her
mother's
death, Leslie moved in with her aunt. Leslie attended
Bryan Station
High School and was graduated from the University of
Kentucky summa cum
laude. In her final year in college, she was voted beauty
queen, and
turned down numerous offers from modeling agencies.
Leslie had two
brief affairs, one with a college football hero, and the
other with her
economics professor. They quickly bored her. The fact
was that she
was brighter than both of them.

Just before Leslie was graduated, her aunt died. Leslie
finished
school and applied for a job at the advertising and public
relations
agency of Bailey & Tomkins. Its offices were on Vine

Street in a
U-shaped brick building with a copper roof and a fountain in the
courtyard.

Jim Bailey, the senior partner, had examined Leslie's resume, and
nodded. "Very impressive. You're in luck. We need a secretary."

"A secretary? I hoped "

"Yes?"

"Nothing."

Leslie started as a secretary, taking notes at all the meetings, her
mind all the while judging and thinking of ways to improve the
advertising campaigns that were being suggested. One morning, an
account executive was saying, "I've thought of the perfect logo for the
Rancho Beef Chili account. On the label of the can, we show a picture
of a cowboy roping a cow. It suggests that the beef is fresh, and "

That's a terrible idea, Leslie thought. They were all staring at her,
and to her horror, Leslie realized she had spoken aloud.

"Would you mind explaining that, young lady?"

"I..." She wished she were somewhere else. Anywhere.

They were all waiting. Leslie took a deep breath. "When people eat
meat, they don't want to be reminded that they're eating a dead
animal."

There was a heavy silence. Jim Bailey cleared his throat.

"Maybe we
should give this a little more thought."

The following week, during a meeting on how to publicize a new beauty
soap account, one of the executives said, "We'll use beauty contest
winners."

"Excuse me," Leslie said diffidently. "I believe that's been done. Why
couldn't we use lovely flight attendants from around the world to show
that our beauty soap is universal?"

In the meetings after that, the men found themselves turning to Leslie
for her opinion.

A year later, she was a junior copywriter, and two years after that,
she became an account executive, handling both advertising and
publicity.

Oliver Russell was the first real challenge that Leslie had had at the
agency. Two weeks after Oliver Russell came to them, Bailey suggested
to Leslie that it might be better to drop him, because he could not
afford to pay their usual agency fee, but Leslie persuaded him to keep
the account.

"Call it pro bono," she said.

Bailey studied her a moment. "Right."

Leslie and Oliver Russell were seated on a bench in Triangle Park. It
was a cool fall day, with a soft breeze coming from the lake. "I hate
politics," Oliver Russell said.

Leslie looked at him in surprise. "Then why in the world are you ?"

"Because I want to change the system, Leslie. It's been taken over by
lobbyists and corporations that help put the wrong people in power and
then control them. There are a lot of things I want to do." His voice
was filled with passion. "The people who are running the country have
turned it into an old boys' club. They care more about themselves than
they do about the people. It's not right, and I'm going to try to
correct that."

Leslie listened as Oliver went on, and she was thinking, He could do
it. There was such a compelling excitement about him. The truth was
that she found everything about him exciting. She had never felt this
way about a man before, and it was an exhilarating experience. She had
no way of knowing how he felt about her. He is always the perfect
gentleman, damn him. It seemed to Leslie that every few minutes people
were coming up to the park bench to shake Oliver's hand and to wish him
well. The women were visually throwing daggers at Leslie. They've
probably all been out with him, Leslie thought. They've probably all
been to bed with him. Well, that's none of my business.

She had heard that until recently he had been dating the daughter of a
senator. She wondered what had happened. That's none of my business,
either.

There was no way to avoid the fact that Oliver's campaign was going
badly. Without money to pay his staff, and no television, radio, or
newspaper ads, it was impossible to compete with Governor Gary Addison,
whose image seemed to be everywhere. Leslie arranged for Oliver to
appear at company picnics, at factories, and at dozens of social
events, but she knew these appearances were all minor-league, and it
frustrated her.

"Have you seen the latest polls?" Jim Bailey asked Leslie. "Your boy
is going down the tubes."

Not if I can help it, Leslie thought.

Leslie and Oliver were having dinner at Cheznous. "It's not working,
is it?" Oliver asked quietly. "There's still plenty of time," Leslie
said reassuringly. "When the voters get to know you " Oliver shook his
head. "I read the polls, too. I want you to know I appreciate
everything you've tried to do for me, Leslie. You've been great." She
sat there looking at him across the table, thinking, He's the most
wonderful man I've ever met, and I can't help him. She wanted to take
him in her arms and hold him and console him. Console him? Who am I
kidding? As they got up to leave, a man, a woman, and two small girls
approached the table. "Oliver! How are you?" The speaker was in his
forties, an attractive-looking man with a black eye patch that gave him
the raffish look of an amiable pirate.

Oliver rose and held out his hand. "Hello, Peter. I'd like you to
meet Leslie Stewart. Peter Tager."

"Hello, Leslie." Tager nodded toward his family. "This is my wife,
Betsy, and this is Elizabeth and this is Rebecca." There was enormous
pride in his voice.

Peter Tager turned to Oliver. "I'm awfully sorry about what happened.
It's a damned shame. I hated to do it, but I had no choice."

"I understand, Peter."

"If there was anything I could have done "

"It doesn't matter. I'm fine."

"You know I wish you only the best of luck."

On the way home, Leslie asked, "What was that all about?"

Oliver started to say something, then stopped. "It's not important."

Leslie lived in a neat one-bedroom apartment in the Brandy-wine section
of Lexington. As they approached the building, Oliver said hesitantly,
"Leslie, I know that your agency is handling me for almost nothing, but
frankly, I think you're wasting your time. It might be better if I
just quit now."

"No," she said, and the intensity of her voice surprised her. "You
can't quit. We'll find a way to make it work."

Oliver turned to look at her. "You really care, don't you?"

Am I reading too much into that question? "Yes," she said quietly. "I
really care."

When they arrived at her apartment, Leslie took a deep breath. "Would
you like to come in?"

He looked at her a long time. "Yes."

Afterward, she never knew who made the first move. All she remembered
was that they were undressing each other and she was in his arms and
there was a wild, feral haste in their lovemaking, and after that, a
slow and easy melting, in a rhythm that was timeless and ecstatic. It
was the most wonderful feeling Leslie had ever experienced.

They were together the whole night, and it was magical. Oliver was
insatiable, giving and demanding at the same time, and he went on
forever. He was an animal. And Leslie thought, Oh, my God, I'm one,
too.

In the morning, over a breakfast of orange juice, scrambled eggs,
toast, and bacon, Leslie said, "There's going to be a picnic at Green
River Lake on Friday, Oliver. There will be a lot of people there.
I'll arrange for you to make a speech. We'll buy radio time to let
everyone know you're going to be there. Then we'll " "Leslie," he
protested, "I haven't the money to do that." "Oh, don't worry about
that," she said airily. "The agency will pay for it." She knew that

there was not the remotest chance that the agency would pay for it. She
intended to do that herself. She would tell Jim Bailey that the money
had been donated by a Russell supporter. And it would be the truth.
Ill do anything in the world to help him, she thought.

There were two hundred people at the picnic at Green River Lake, and
when Oliver addressed the crowd, he was brilliant.

"Half the people in this country don't vote," he told them. "We have
the lowest voting record of any industrial country in the world less
than fifty percent. If you want things to change, it's your
responsibility to make sure they do change. It's more than a
responsibility, it's a privilege. There's an election coming up soon.
Whether you vote for me or my opponent, vote. Be there."

They cheered him.

Leslie arranged for Oliver to appear at as many functions as possible.
He presided at the opening of a children's clinic, dedicated a bridge,
talked to women's groups, labor groups, at charity events, and
retirement homes. Still, he kept slipping in the polls. Whenever
Oliver was not campaigning, he and Leslie found some time to be
together. They went riding in a horse-drawn carriage through Triangle
Park, spent a Saturday afternoon at the Antique Market, and had dinner
at A la Lucie. Oliver gave Leslie flowers for Groundhog Day and on the
anniversary of the Battle of Bull Run, and left loving messages on her

answering machine: "Darling where are you? I miss you, miss you, miss you."

"I'm madly in love with your answering machine. Do you have any idea how sexy it sounds?"

"I think it must be illegal to be this happy. I love you."

It didn't matter to Leslie where she and Oliver went: She just wanted to be with him.

One of the most exciting things they did was to go white-water rafting on the Russell Fork River one Sunday. The trip started innocently, gently, until the river began to pound its way around the base of the mountains in a giant loop that began a series of deafening, breathtaking vertical drops in the rapids: five feet... eight feet... nine feet... only a terrifying raft length apart. The trip took three and a half hours, and when Leslie and Oliver got off the raft, they were soaking wet and glad to be alive. They could not keep their hands off each other. They made love in their cabin, in the back of his automobile, in the woods.

One early fall evening, Oliver prepared dinner at his home, a charming house in Versailles, a small town near Lexington. There were grilled flank steaks marinated in soy sauce, garlic, and herbs, served with baked potato, salad, and a perfect red wine.

"You're a wonderful cook," Leslie told him. She snuggled

up to him.
"In fact, you're a wonderful everything, sweetheart."
"Thank you, my
love." He remembered something. "I have a little
surprise for you
that I want you to try." He disappeared into the bedroom
for a moment
and came out carrying a small bottle with a clear liquid
inside. "Here
it is," he said. "What is it?" "Have you heard of
Ecstasy?" "Heard
of it? I'm in it." "I mean the drug Ecstasy. This is
liquid Ecstasy.
It's supposed to be a great aphrodisiac." Leslie frowned.
"Darling
you don't need that. We don't need it. It could be
dangerous." She
hesitated. "Do you use it often?" Oliver laughed. "As a
matter of
fact, I don't. Take that look off your face. A friend of
mine gave me
this and told me to try it. This would have been the
first time."
"Let's not have a first time," Leslie said. "Will you
throw it away?"
"You're right. Of course I will." He went into the
bathroom, and a
moment later Leslie heard the toilet flush. Oliver
reappeared. "All
gone." He grinned. "Who needs Ecstasy in a bottle? I
have it in a
better package." And he took her in his arms. Leslie had
read the
love stories and had heard the love songs, but nothing had
prepared her
for the incredible reality. She had always thought that
romantic
lyrics were sentimental nonsense, wishful dreaming. She
knew better
now. The world suddenly seemed brighter, more beautiful.
Everything
was touched with magic, and the magic was Oliver Russell.

One Saturday morning, Oliver and Leslie were hiking in the

Breaks
Interstate Park, enjoying the spectacular scenery that surrounded
them.

"I've never been on this trail before," Leslie said.

"I think you're going to enjoy it."

They were approaching a sharp curve in the path. As they rounded it,
Leslie stopped, stunned. In the middle of the path was a hand-painted
wooden sign: LESLIE, WILL YOU

MARRY ME?

Leslie's heart began to beat faster. She turned to Oliver,
speechless.

He took her in his arms. "Will you?"

How did I get so lucky? Leslie wondered. She hugged him tightly and
whispered, "Yes, darling. Of course I will."

"I'm afraid I can't promise you that you're going to marry a governor,
but I'm a pretty good attorney."

She snuggled up to him and whispered, "That will do nicely."

A few nights later, Leslie was getting dressed to meet Oliver for
dinner when he telephoned.

"Darling, I'm terribly sorry, but I've bad news. I have to go to a
meeting tonight, and I'll have to cancel our dinner. Will you forgive
me?"

Leslie smiled and said softly, "You're forgiven."

The following day, Leslie picked up a copy of the State Journal. The
headline read: WOMAN'S BODY FOUND IN KENTUCKY RIVER. The story went
on: "Early this morning, the body of a nude woman who appeared to be in
her early twenties was found by police in the Kentucky River ten miles
east of Lexington. An autopsy is being performed to determine the
cause of death...."

Leslie shuddered as she read the story. To die so young. Did she have
a lover? A husband? How thankful I am to be alive and so happy and so
loved.

It seemed that all of Lexington was talking about the forthcoming
wedding. Lexington was a small town, and Oliver Russell was a popular
figure. They were a spectacular-looking couple, Oliver dark and
handsome, and Leslie with her lovely face and figure and honey-blond
hair. The news had spread like wildfire. "I hope he knows how lucky
he is," Jim Bailey said. Leslie smiled. "We're both lucky."

"Are you going to elope?"

"No. Oliver wants to have a formal wedding. We're getting married at
the Calvary Chapel church."

"When does the happy event take place?" "In six weeks."

A few days later, a story on the front page of the State Journal read:
"An autopsy has revealed that the woman found in the

Kentucky River,
identified as Lisa Burnette, a legal secretary, died of an overdose of
a dangerous illegal drug known on the streets as liquid Ecstasy...."

Liquid Ecstasy. Leslie recalled the evening with Oliver. And she
thought, How lucky it was that he threw that bottle away.

The next few weeks were filled with frantic preparations for the
wedding. There was so much to do. Invitations went out to two hundred
people. Leslie chose a maid of honor and selected her outfit, a
ballerina-length dress with matching shoes and gloves to complement the
length of the sleeves. For herself, Leslie shopped at Fayette Mall on
Nicholasville Road and selected a floor-length gown with a full skirt
and a sweep train, shoes to match the gown, and long gloves. Oliver
ordered a black cutaway coat with striped trousers, gray waistcoat, a
wing-collared white shirt, and a striped ascot. His best man was a
lawyer in his firm.

"Everything is set," Oliver told Leslie. "I've made all the
arrangements for the reception afterward. Almost everyone has
accepted."

Leslie felt a small shiver go through her. "I can't wait, my
darling."

On a Thursday night one week before the wedding, Oliver came to
Leslie's apartment. "I'm afraid something has come up, Leslie. A

client of mine is in trouble. I'm going to have to fly to
Paris to
straighten things out." "Paris? How long will you be
gone?" "It
shouldn't take more than two or three days, four days at
the most. I'll
be back in plenty of time." "Tell the pilot to fly
safely." "I
promise." When Oliver left, Leslie picked up the
newspaper on the
table. Idly, she turned to the horoscope by Zoltaire. It
read: FOR
LEO (JULY 23RD TO AUGUST 22ND). THIS is NOT

A GOOD DAY TO CHANGE PLANS. TAKING RISKS CAN LEAD TO
SERIOUS

PROBLEMS.

Leslie read the horoscope again, disturbed. She was
almost tempted to
telephone Oliver and tell him not to leave. But that's
ridiculous, she
thought. It's just a stupid horoscope.

By Monday, Leslie had not heard from Oliver. She
telephoned his
office, but the staff had no information. There was no
word from him
Tuesday. Leslie was beginning to panic. At four o'clock
on Wednesday
morning, she was awakened by the insistent ringing of the
telephone.
She sat up in bed and thought: It's Oliver! Thank God.
She knew that
she should be angry with him for not calling her sooner,
but that was
unimportant now. She picked up the receiver. "Oliver
..." A male
voice said, "Is this Leslie Stewart?" She felt a sudden
cold chill.
"Who who is this?" "Al Towers, Associated Press. We have
a story
going out on our wires, Miss Stewart, and we wanted to get

your
reaction." Something terrible had happened. Oliver was dead. "Miss
Stewart?" "Yes." Her voice was a strangled whisper. "Could we get a
quote from you?" "A quote?" "About Oliver Russell marrying Senator
Todd Davis's daughter in Paris." For an instant the room seemed to
spin. "You and Mr. Russell were engaged, weren't you? If we could
get a quote ..." She sat there, frozen. "Miss Stewart."

She found her voice. "Yes." wish them both well." She replaced the
receiver, numb. It was a nightmare. She would awaken in a few minutes
and find that she had been dreaming.

But this was no dream. She had been abandoned again. "Yourfather's
not coming back." She walked into the bathroom and stared at her pale
image in the mirror. "We have a story going out on our wires." Oliver
had married someone else. Why? What have I done wrong? How have I
failed him? But deep down she knew that it was Oliver who had failed
her. He was gone. How could she face the future?

When Leslie walked into the agency that morning, everyone was trying
hard not to stare at her. She went into Jim Bailey's office.

He took one look at her pale face and said, "You shouldn't have come in
today, Leslie. Why don't you go home and "

She took a deep breath. "No, thank you. I'll be fine."

The radio and television newscasts and afternoon newspapers were filled

with details of the Paris wedding. Senator Todd Davis was without
doubt Kentucky's most influential citizen, and the story of his
daughter's marriage and of the groom's jilting Leslie was big news.

The phones in Leslie's office never stopped ringing.

"This is the Courier-Journal, Miss Stewart. Could you give us a
statement about the wedding?"

"Yes. The only thing I care about is Oliver Russell's happiness."

"But you and he were going to be "

"It would have been a mistake for us to marry. Senator Davis's
daughter was in his life first. Obviously, he never got over her. I
wish them both well."

"This is the State Journal in Frankfort...."

And so it went.

It seemed to Leslie that half of Lexington pitied her, and the other
half rejoiced at what had happened to her. Wherever Leslie went, there
were whispers and hastily broken-off conversations. She was fiercely
determined not to show her feelings.

"How could you let him do this to ?"

"When you truly love someone," Leslie said firmly, "you want him to be
happy. Oliver Russell is the finest human being I've ever known. I
wish them both every happiness."

She sent notes of apology to all those who had been invited to the
wedding and returned their gifts.

Leslie had been half hoping for and half dreading the call from Oliver.
Still, when it came, she was unprepared. She was shaken by the
familiar sound of his voice. "Leslie ... I don't know what to say."

"It's true, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Then there isn't anything to say."

"I just wanted to explain to you how it happened. Before I met you,
Jan and I were almost engaged. And when I saw her again I I knew that
I still loved her."

"I understand, Oliver. Goodbye."

Five minutes later, Leslie's secretary buzzed her. "There's a
telephone call for you on line one, Miss Stewart."

"I don't want to talk to "

"It's Senator Davis."

The father of the bride. What does he want with me? Leslie wondered.
She picked up the telephone.

A deep southern voice said, "Miss Stewart?"

"Yes."

"This is Todd Davis. I think you and I should have a little talk."

She hesitated. "Senator, I don't know what we "

"I'll pick you up in one hour." The line went dead.

Exactly one hour later, a limousine pulled up in front of the office
building where Leslie worked. A chauffeur opened the car door for
Leslie. Senator Davis was in the backseat. He was a
distinguished-looking man with flowing white hair and a small, neat
mustache. He had the face of a patriarch. Even in the fall he was
dressed in his trademark white suit and white broad-brimmed leghorn
hat. He was a classic figure from an earlier century, an old-fashioned
southern gentleman.

As Leslie got into the car, Senator Davis said, "You're a beautiful
young woman."

"Thank you," she said stiffly.

The limousine started off.

"I didn't mean just physically, Miss Stewart. I've been hearing about
the manner in which you've been handling this whole sordid matter. It
must be very distressing for you. I couldn't believe the news when I
heard it." His voice filled with anger. "Whatever happened to good
old-fashioned morality? To tell you the truth, I'm disgusted with
Oliver for treating you so shabbily. And I'm furious with Jan for
marrying him. In a way, I feel guilty, because she's my daughter. They
deserve each other." His voice was choked with emotion.

They rode in silence for a while. When Leslie finally

spoke, she said,
"I know Oliver. I'm sure he didn't mean to hurt me. What happened...
just happened. I want only the best for him. He deserves that, and I
wouldn't do anything to stand in his way."

"That's very gracious of you." He studied her a moment. "You really
are a remarkable young lady."

The limousine had come to a stop. Leslie looked out the window. They
had reached Paris Pike, at the Kentucky Horse Center. There were more
than a hundred horse farms in and around Lexington, and the largest of
them was owned by Senator Davis. As far as the eye could see were
white plank fences, white paddocks with red trim, and rolling Kentucky
bluegrass.

Leslie and Senator Davis stepped out of the car and walked over to the
fence surrounding the racetrack. They stood there a few moments,
watching the beautiful animals working out.

Senator Davis turned to Leslie. "I'm a simple man," he said quietly.
"Oh, I know how that must sound to you, but it's the truth. I was born
here, and I could spend the rest of my life here. There's no place in
the world like it. Just look around you, Miss Stewart. This is as
close as we may ever come to heaven. Can you blame me for not wanting
to leave all this? Mark Twain said that when the world came to an end,
he wanted to be in Kentucky, because it's always a good twenty years
behind. I have to spend half my life in Washington, and I

loathe
it."

"Then why do you do it?"

"Because I have a sense of obligation. Our people voted me into the
Senate, and until they vote me out, I'll be there trying to do the best
job I can." He abruptly changed the subject. "I want you to know how
much I admire your sentiments and the way you've behaved. If you had
been nasty about this, I suppose it could have created quite a scandal.
As it is, well I'd like to show my appreciation."

Leslie looked at him.

"I thought that perhaps you would like to get away for a while, take a
little trip abroad, spend some time traveling. Naturally, I'd pick up
all the "

"Please don't do this."

"I was only "

"I know. I haven't met your daughter, Senator Davis, but if Oliver
loves her, she must be very special. I hope they'll be happy."

He said awkwardly, "I think you should know they're coming back here to
get married again. In Paris, it was a civil ceremony, but Jan wants a
church wedding here."

It was a stab in the heart. "I see. All right. They have nothing to
worry about."

"Thank you."

The wedding took place two weeks later, in the Calvary Chapel church
where Leslie and Oliver were to have been married. The church was
packed.

Oliver Russell, Jan, and Senator Todd Davis were standing before the
minister at the altar. Jan Davis was an attractive brunette, with an
imposing figure and an aristocratic air.

The minister was nearing the end of the ceremony. "God meant for man
and woman to be united in holy matrimony, and as you go through life
together..."

The church door opened, and Leslie Stewart walked in. She stood at the
back for a moment, listening, then moved to the last pew, where she
remained standing.

The minister was saying, "... so if anyone knows why this couple should
not be united in holy matrimony, let him speak now or forever hold his
..." He glanced up and saw Leslie. "... hold his peace."

Almost involuntarily, heads began to turn in Leslie's direction.
Whispers began to sweep through the crowd. People sensed that they
were about to witness a dramatic scene, and the church filled with
sudden tension.

The minister waited a moment, then nervously cleared his throat. "Then,
by the power vested in me, I now pronounce you man and wife." There was

a note of deep relief in his voice. "You may kiss the bride."

When the minister looked up again, Leslie was gone.

The final note in Leslie Stewart's diary read:

Dear Diary: It was a beautiful wedding. Oliver's bride is very pretty.
She wore a lovely white lace-and-satin wedding gown with a halter top
and a bolero jacket. Oliver looked more handsome than ever. He seemed
very happy. I'm pleased.

Because before I'm finished with him, I'm going to make him wish he had
never been born.

Two.

It was Senator Todd Davis who had arranged the reconciliation of Oliver
Russell and his daughter. Todd Davis was a widower. A multi
billionaire the senator owned tobacco plantations, coal mines, oil
fields in Oklahoma and Alaska, and a world-class racing stable. As
Senate majority leader, he was one of the most powerful men in
Washington, and was serving his fifth term. He was a man with a simple
philosophy: Never forget a favor, never forgive a slight. He prided
himself on picking winners, both at the track and in politics, and
early on he had spotted Oliver Russell as a comer. The fact that
Oliver might marry his daughter was an unexpected plus, until, of
course, Jan foolishly called it off. When the senator heard the news
of the impending wedding between Oliver Russell and Leslie

Stewart, he
found it disturbing. Very disturbing.

Senator Davis had first met Oliver Russell when Oliver handled a legal
matter for him. Senator Davis was impressed. Oliver was intelligent,
handsome, and articulate, with a boyish charm that drew people to him.
The senator arranged to have lunch with Oliver on a regular basis, and
Oliver had no idea how carefully he was being assessed. A month after
meeting Oliver, Senator Davis sent for Peter Tager. "I think we've
found our next governor." Tager was an earnest man who had grown up in
a religious family. His father was a history teacher and his mother
was a housewife, and they were devout churchgoers. When Peter Tager
was eleven, he had been traveling in a car with his parents and younger
brother when the brakes of the car failed. There had been a deadly
accident. The only one who survived was Peter, who lost an eye. Peter
believed that Goo had spared him so that he could spread His word.
Peter Tager understood the dynamics of politics better than anyone
Senator Davis had ever met. Tager knew where the votes were and how to
get them. He had an uncanny sense of what the public wanted to hear
and what it had gotten tired of hearing. But even more important to
Senator Davis was the fact that Peter Tager was a man he could trust, a
man of integrity. People liked him. The black eye patch he wore gave
him a dashing look. What mattered to Tager more than anything in the
world was his family. The senator had never met a man so

deeply proud
of his wife and children.

When Senator Davis first met him, Peter Tager had been contemplating
going into the ministry.

"So many people need help, Senator. I want to do what I can."

But Senator Davis had talked him out of the idea. "Think of how many
more people you can help by working for me in the Senate of the United
States." It had been a felicitous choice. Tager knew how to get
things done.

"The man I have in mind to run for governor is Oliver Russell."

"The attorney?"

"Yes. He's a natural. I have a hunch if we get behind him, he can't
miss."

"Sounds interesting, Senator."

The two of them began to discuss it.

Senator Davis spoke to Jan about Oliver Russell. "The boy has a hot
future, honey." "He has a hot past, too, Father. He's the biggest
wolf in town." "Now, darling, you mustn't listen to gossip. I've
invited Oliver to dinner here Friday."

The dinner Friday evening went well. Oliver was charming, and in spite
of herself, Jan found herself warming to him. The senator sat at his
place watching them, asking questions that brought out the

best in
Oliver.

At the end of the evening, Jan invited Oliver to a dinner party the
following Saturday. "I'd be delighted."

From that night on, they started seeing only each other.

"They'll be getting married soon," the senator predicted to Peter
Tager. "It's time we got Oliver's campaign rolling."

Oliver was summoned to a meeting at Senator Davis's office. "I want to
ask you a question," the senator said. "How would you like to be the
governor of Kentucky?" Oliver looked at him in surprise. "I I haven't
thought about it." "Well, Peter Tager and I have. There's an election
coming up next year. That gives us more than enough time to build you
up, let people know who you are. With us behind you, you can't lose."
And Oliver knew it was true. Senator Davis was a powerful man, in
control of a well-oiled political machine, a machine that could create
myths or destroy anyone who got in its way. "You'd have to be totally
committed," the senator warned. "I would be."

"I have some even better news for you, son. As far as I'm concerned,
this is only the first step. You serve a term or two as governor, and
I promise you we'll move you into the White House."

Oliver swallowed. "Are are you serious?"

"I don't joke about things like this. I don't have to tell you that
this is the age of television. You have something that

money can't buy
charisma. People are drawn to you. You genuinely like people, and it
shows. It's the same quality Jack Kennedy had."

"I I don't know what to say, Todd."

"You don't have to say anything. I have to return to Washington
tomorrow, but when I get back, we'll go to work."

A few weeks later, the campaign for the office of governor began.
Billboards with Oliver's picture flooded the state. He appeared on
television and at rallies and political seminars. Peter Tager had his
own private polls that showed Oliver's popularity increasing each week.
"He's up another five points," he told the senator. "He's only ten
points behind the governor, and we've still got plenty of time left. In
another few weeks, they should be neck and neck." Senator Davis
nodded. "Oliver's going to win. No question about it."

Todd Davis and Jan were having breakfast. "Has our boy proposed to you
yet?"

Jan smiled. "He hasn't come right out and asked me, but he's been
hinting around."

"Well, don't let him hint too long. I want you to be married before he
becomes governor. It will play better if the governor has a wife."

Jan put her arms around her father. "I'm so glad you brought him into
my life. I'm mad about him."

The senator beamed. "As long as he makes you happy, I'm happy."

Everything was going perfectly.

The following evening, when Senator Davis came home, Jan was in her
room, packing, her face stained with tears. He looked at her,
concerned. "What's going on, baby?" "I'm getting out of here. I
never want to see Oliver again as long as I live!" "Whoa! Hold on
there. What are you talking about?" She turned to him. "I'm talking
about Oliver." Her tone was bitter. "He spent last night in a motel
with my best friend. She couldn't wait to call and tell me what a
wonderful lover he was." The senator stood there in shock. "Couldn't
she have been just ?" "No. I called Oliver. He he couldn't deny it.
I've decided to leave. I'm going to Paris."

"Are you sure you're doing ?"

"I'm positive."

And the next morning Jan was gone.

The senator sent for Oliver. "I'm disappointed in you, son." Oliver
took a deep breath. "I'm sorry about what happened, Todd. It was it
was just one of those things. I had a few drinks and this woman came
on to me and well, it was hard to say no." "I can understand that,"
the senator said sympathetically. "After all, you're a man, right?"
Oliver smiled in relief. "Right. It won't happen again, I can assure
" "It's too bad, though. You would have made a fine

governor." The
blood drained from Oliver's face. "What what are you saying, Todd?"
"Well, Oliver, it wouldn't look right if I supported you now, would it?
I mean, when you think about Jan's feelings " "What does the
governorship have to do with Jan?" "I've been telling everybody that
there was a good chance that the next governor was going to be my
son-in-law. But since you're not going to be my son-in-law, well, I'll
just have to make new plans, won't I?" "Be reasonable, Todd. You
can't " Senator Davis's smile faded. "Never tell me what I can or
can't do, Oliver. I can make you and I can break you!" He smiled
again. "But don't misunderstand me. No hard feelings. I wish you
only the best."

Oliver sat there, silent for a moment. "I see." He rose to his feet.
"I I'm sorry about all this."

"I am, too, Oliver. I really am."

When Oliver left, the senator called in Peter Tager. "We're dropping
the campaign."

"Dropping it? Why? It's in the bag. The latest polls " "Just do as I
tell you. Cancel all of Oliver's appearances.

As far as we're concerned, he's out of the race."

Two weeks later, the polls began to show a drop in Oliver Russell's
ratings. The billboards started to disappear, and the radio and
television ads had been canceled.

"Governor Addison is beginning to pick up ratings in the polls. If
we're going to find a new candidate, we'd better hurry," Peter Tager
said.

The senator was thoughtful. "We have plenty of time. Let's play this
out."

It was a few days later that Oliver Russell went to the Bailey &
Tomkins agency to ask them to handle his campaign. Jim Bailey
introduced him to Leslie, and Oliver was immediately taken with her.
She was not only beautiful, she was intelligent and sympathetic and
believed in him. He had sometimes felt a certain aloofness in Jan, but
he had overlooked it. With Leslie, it was completely different. She
was warm and sensitive, and it had been natural to fall in love with
her. From time to time, Oliver thought about what he had lost. "...
this is only the first step. You serve a term or two as governor, and
I promise you we'll move you into the White House."

The hell with it. I can be happy without any of that, Oliver persuaded
himself. But occasionally, he could not help thinking about the good
things he might have accomplished.

With Oliver's wedding imminent, Senator Davis had sent for Tager.
"Peter, we have a problem. We can't let Oliver Russell throw away his
career by marrying a nobody." Peter Tager frowned. "I don't know what
you can do about it now, Senator. The wedding is all

set." Senator
Davis was thoughtful for a moment. "The race hasn't been run yet, has
it?" He telephoned his daughter in Paris. "Jan, I have some terrible
news for you. Oliver is getting married." There was a long silence.
"I I heard." "The sad part is that he doesn't love this woman. He
told me he's marrying her on the rebound because you left him. He's
still in love with you." "Did Oliver say that?" "Absolutely. It's a
terrible thing he's doing to himself.

And, in a way, you're forcing him to do it, baby. When you ran out on
him, he just fell apart."

"Father, I I had no idea."

"I've never seen a more unhappy man."

"I don't know what to say."

"Do you still love him?"

"I'll always love him. I made a terrible mistake."

"Well, then, maybe it's not too late."

"But he's getting married."

"Honey, why don't we just wait and see what happens? Maybe he'll come
to his senses."

When Senator Davis hung up, Peter Tager said, "What are you up to,
Senator?"

"Me?" Senator Davis said innocently. "Nothing. Just putting a few
pieces back together, where they belong. I think I'll

have a little
talk with Oliver."

That afternoon, Oliver Russell was in Senator Davis's office. "It's
good to see you, Oliver. Thank you for dropping by. You're looking
very well." "Thank you, Todd. So are you." "Well, I'm getting on,
but I do the best I can." "You asked to see me, Todd?" "Yes, Oliver.
Sit down." Oliver took a chair. "I want you to help me out with a
legal problem I'm having in Paris. One of my companies over there is
in trouble.

There's a stockholders' meeting coming up. I'd like you to be there
for it." "I'll be glad to. When is the meeting? I'll check my
calendar and " "I'm afraid you'd have to leave this afternoon." Oliver
stared at him. "This afternoon?" "I hate to give you such short
notice, but I just heard about it. My plane's waiting at the airport.
Can you manage it? It's important to me." Oliver was thoughtful.
"I'll try to work it out, somehow." "I appreciate that, Oliver. I
knew I could count on you." He leaned forward. "I'm real unhappy
about what's been happening to you. Have you seen the latest polls?"
He sighed. "I'm afraid you're way down." "I know." "I wouldn't mind
so much, but..." He stopped. "But ?" "You'd have made a fine
governor. In fact, your future couldn't have been brighter. You would
have had money... power. Let me tell you something about money and
power, Oliver. Money doesn't care who owns it. A bum can

win it in a
lottery, or a dunce can inherit it, or someone can get it by holding up
a bank. But power that's something different. To have power is to own
the world. If you were governor of this state, you could affect the
lives of everybody living here. You could get bills passed that would
help the people, and you'd have the power to veto bills that could harm
them. I once promised you that someday you could be President of the
United

States. Well, I meant it, and you could have been. And think about
that power, Oliver, to be the most important man in the world, running
the most powerful country in the world. That's something worth
dreaming about, isn't it? Just think about it." He repeated slowly,
"The most powerful man in the world." Oliver was listening, wondering
where the conversation was leading. As though in answer to Oliver's
unspoken question, the senator said, "And you let all that get away,
for a piece of pussy. I thought you were smarter than that, son."
Oliver waited. Senator Davis said casually, "I talked to Jan this
morning. She's in Paris, at the Ritz. When I told her you were
getting married well, she just broke down and sobbed." "I I'm sorry,
Todd. I really am." The senator sighed. "It's just a shame that you
two couldn't get together again." "Todd, I'm getting married next
week." "I know. And I wouldn't interfere with that for anything in
the world. I suppose I'm just an old sentimentalist, but

to me
marriage is the most sacred thing on earth. You have my
blessing,
Oliver." "I appreciate that." "I know you do." The
senator looked at
his watch. "Well, you'll want to go home and pack. The
background and
details of the meeting will be faxed to you in Paris."
Oliver rose.
"Right. And don't worry. I'll take care of things over
there." "I'm
sure you will. By the way, I've booked you in at the

Ritz."

On Senator Davis's luxurious Challenger, flying to Paris,
Oliver
thought about his conversation with the senator. "You'd
have made a
fine governor. In fact, your future couldn't have been
brighter,...
Let me tell you something about money and power,
Oliver.... To have
power is to own the world. If you were governor of this
state, you
could affect the lives of everybody living here. You
could get bills
passed that would help the people, and you could veto
bills that might
harm them."

But I don't need that power, Oliver reassured himself.
No. I'm
getting married to a wonderful woman. We'll make each
other happy.
Very happy.

When Oliver arrived at the Trans Air Execujet base at Le
Bourget
Airport in Paris, there was a limousine waiting for him.
"Where to,
Mr. Russell?" the chauffeur asked. "By the way, I've
booked you in at
the Ritz." Jan was at the Ritz. It would be smarter,

Oliver thought,
if I stayed at a different hotel the Plaza-Athen6e or the Meurice. The
chauffeur was looking at him expectantly. "The Ritz," Oliver said.
The least he could do was to apologize to Jan.

He telephoned her from the lobby. "It's Oliver. I'm in Paris."

"I know," Jan said. "Father called me."

"I'm downstairs. I'd like to say hello if you "

"Come up."

When Oliver walked into Jan's suite, he was still not sure what he was
going to say.

Jan was waiting for him at the door. She stood there a moment,
smiling, then threw her arms around him and held him close. "Father
told me you were coming here. I'm so glad!"

Oliver stood there, at a loss. He was going to have to tell her about
Leslie, but he had to find the right words. I'm sorry about what
happened with us.... I never meant to hurt you.... I've fallen in love
with someone else.... but I'll always... "I I have to tell you
something," he said awkwardly. "The fact is ..." And as he looked at
Jan, he thought of her father's words. "I once promised you that some
day you could be President of the United States. Well, I meant it....
And think about that power, Oliver, to be the most important man in the
world, running the most powerful country in the world. That's

something worth dreaming about, isn't it?"

"Yes, darling?"

And the words poured out as though they had a life of their own. "I
made a terrible mistake, Jan. I was a bloody fool. I love you. I
want to marry you."

"Oliver!"

AA

"Will you marry me?"

There was no hesitation. "Yes. Oh, yes, my love!"

He picked her up and carried her into the bedroom, and moments later
they were in bed, naked, and Jan was saying, "You don't know how much
I've missed you, darling."

"I must have been out of my mind.. .."

Jan pressed close to his naked body and moaned. "Oh! This feels so
wonderful."

"It's because we belong together." Oliver sat up. "Let's tell your
father the news."

She looked at him, surprised. "Now?"

"Yes."

And I'm going to have to tell Leslie.

Fifteen minutes later Jan was speaking to her father. "Oliver and I
are going to be married." "That's wonderful news, Jan. I couldn't be

more surprised or delighted. By the way, the mayor of
Paris is an old
friend of mine. He's expecting your call. He'll marry
you there. I'll
make sure everything's arranged." "But " "Put Oliver on."
"Just a
minute, Father." Jan held out the phone to Oliver. "He
wants to talk
to you." Oliver picked up the phone. "Todd?" "Well, my
boy, you've
made me very happy. You've done the right thing."

"Thank you. I feel the same way."

"I'm arranging for you and Jan to be married in Paris.
And when you
come home, you'll have a big church wedding here. At the
Calvary
Chapel."

Oliver frowned. "The Calvary Chapel? I I don't think
that's a good
idea, Todd. That's where Leslie and I... Why don't we ?"

Senator Davis's voice was cold. "You embarrassed my
daughter, Oliver,
and I'm sure you want to make up for that. Am I right?"

There was a long pause. "Yes, Todd. Of course."

"Thank you, Oliver. I look forward to seeing you in a few
days. We
have a lot to talk about... governor...."

The Paris wedding was a brief civil ceremony in the
mayor's office.
When it was over, Jan looked at Oliver and said, "Father
wants to give
us a church wedding at the Calvary Chapel."

Oliver hesitated, thinking about Leslie and what it would
do to her.
But he had come too far to back down now. "Whatever he
wants."

Oliver could not get Leslie out of his mind. She had done nothing to
deserve what he had done to her. I'll call her and explain. But each
time he picked up the telephone, he thought: How can I explain? What
can I tell her? And he had no answer. He had finally gotten up the
nerve to call her, but the press had gotten to her first, and he had
felt worse afterward.

The day after Oliver and Jan returned to Lexington, Oliver's election
campaign went back into high gear. Peter Tager had set all the wheels
in motion, and Oliver became ubiquitous again on television and radio
and in the newspapers. He spoke to a large crowd at the Kentucky
Kingdom Thrill Park and headed a rally at the Toyota Motor Plant in
Georgetown. He spoke at the twenty-thousand-square-foot mall in
Lancaster. And that was only the beginning.

Peter Tager arranged for a campaign bus to take Oliver around the
state. The bus toured from Georgetown down to Stanford and stopped at
Frankfort... Versailles ... Winchester ... Louisville. Oliver spoke at
the Kentucky Fairground and at the Exposition Center. In Oliver's
honor, they served burgoo, the traditional Kentucky stew made of
chicken, veal, beef, lamb, pork, and a variety of fresh vegetables
cooked in a big kettle over an open fire.

Oliver's ratings kept going up. The only interruption in the campaign
had been Oliver's wedding. He had seen Leslie at the back

of the
church, and he had had an uneasy feeling. He talked about
it with
Peter Tager. "You don't think Leslie would try to do
anything to hurt
me, do you?" "Of course not. And even if she wanted to,
what could
she do? Forget her."

Oliver knew that Tager was right. Things were moving
along
beautifully. There was no reason to worry. Nothing could
stop him
now. Nothing.

On election night, Leslie Stewart sat alone in her
apartment in front
of her television set, watching the returns. Precinct by
precinct,
Oliver's lead kept mounting. Finally, at five minutes
before midnight,
Governor Addison appeared on television to make his
concession speech.
Leslie turned off the set. She stood up and took a deep
breath. Weep
no more, my lady, Oh, weep no more today! We will sing
one song for
the old Kentucky home, For the old Kentucky home far away.
It was
time.

Three.

Senator Todd Davis was having a busy morning. He had
flown into
Louisville from the capital for the day, to attend a sale
of
Thoroughbreds. "You have to keep up the bloodlines," he
told Peter
Tager, as they sat watching the splendid-looking horses
being led in
and out of the large arena. "That's what counts, Peter."
A beautiful
mare was being led into the center of the ring. "That's

Sail Away,"
Senator Davis said. "I want her." The bidding was spirited, but ten
minutes later, when it was over, Sail Away belonged to Senator Davis.
The cellular phone rang. Peter Tager answered it. "Yes?" He listened
a moment, then turned to the senator. "Do you want to talk to Leslie
Stewart?"

Senator Davis frowned. He hesitated a moment, then took the phone from
Tager. "Miss Stewart?" "I'm sorry to bother you, Senator Davis, but I
wonder if I could see you? I need a favor." "Well, I'm flying back to
Washington tonight, so " "I could come and meet you. It's really
important." Senator Davis hesitated a moment. "Well, if it's that
important, I can certainly accommodate you, young lady. I'll be
leaving for my farm in a few minutes. Do you want to meet me there?"
"That will be fine." "I'll see you in an hour." "Thank you." Davis
pressed the END button and turned to Tager. "I was wrong about her. I
thought she was smarter than that. She should have asked me for money
before Jan and Oliver got married." He was thoughtful for a moment,
then his face broke into a slow grin. "I'll be a son of a bitch."
"What is it, Senator?" "I just figured out what this urgency is all
about. Miss Stewart has discovered that she's pregnant with Oliver's
baby and she's going to need a little financial help. It's the oldest
con game in the world."

One hour later, Leslie was driving onto the grounds of

Dutch Hill, the
senator's farm. A guard was waiting outside the main
house. "Miss
Stewart?" "Yes." "Senator Davis is expecting you. This
way, please."
He showed Leslie inside, along a wide corridor that led to
a large
paneled library crammed with books. Senator Davis was at
his desk,
thumbing through a volume. He looked up and rose as
Leslie entered.
"It's good to see you, my dear. Sit down, please."
Leslie took a
seat. The senator held up his book. "This is fascinating.
It lists
the name of every Kentucky Derby winner from the first
derby to the
latest. Do you know who the first Kentucky Derby winner
was?" "No."
"Aristides, in 1875. But I'm sure you didn't come here to
discuss
horses." He put the book down. "You said you wanted a
favor." He
wondered how she was going to phrase it. I just found out
I'm going to
have Oliver's baby, and I don't know what to do.... I
don't want to
cause a scandal, but... I'm willing to raise the baby, but
I don't have
enough money.... "Do you know Henry Chambers?" Leslie
asked. Senator
Davis blinked, caught completely off guard. "Do I Henry?
Yes, I do.
Why?" "I would appreciate it very much if you would give
me an
introduction to him."

Senator Davis looked at her, hastily reorganizing his
thoughts. "Is
that the favor? You want to meet Henry Chambers?"

"Yes."

"I'm afraid he's not here anymore, Miss Stewart. He's

living in
Phoenix, Arizona."

"I know. I'm leaving for Phoenix in the morning. I thought it would
be nice if I knew someone there."

Senator Davis studied her a moment. His instinct told him that there
was something going on that he did not understand.

He phrased his next question cautiously. "Do you know anything about
Henry Chambers?"

"No. Only that he comes from Kentucky."

He sat there, making up his mind. She's a beautiful lady, he thought.
Henry will owe me a favor. "I'll make a call."

Five minutes later, he was speaking to Henry Chambers.

"Henry, it's Todd. You'll be sorry to know that I bought Sail Away
this morning. I know you had your eye on her." He listened a moment,
then laughed. "I'll bet you did. I hear you just got another divorce.
Too bad. I liked Jessica."

Leslie listened as the conversation went on for a few more minutes.
Then Senator Davis said, "Henry, I'm going to do you a good turn. A
friend of mine is arriving in Phoenix tomorrow, and she doesn't know a
soul there. I would appreciate it if you would keep an eye on her....
What does she look like?" He looked over at Leslie and smiled. "She's
not too bad-looking. Just don't get any ideas."

He listened a moment, then turned back to Leslie. "What

time does your
plane get in?"

"At two-fifty. Delta flight 159."

The senator repeated the information into the phone. "Her
name is
Leslie Stewart. You'll thank me for this. You take care
now, Henry.
I'll be in touch." He replaced the receiver.

"Thank you," Leslie said.

"Is there anything else I can do for you?"

"No. That's all I need."

Why? What the hell does Leslie Stewart want with Henry
Chambers?

The public fiasco with Oliver Russell had been a hundred
times worse
than anything Leslie could have imagined. It was a
never-ending
nightmare. Everywhere Leslie went there were the
whispers: "She's the
one. He practically jilted her at the altar___" "I'm
saving my wedding
invitation as a souvenir...." "I wonder what she's going
to do with
her wedding gown?..." The public gossip fueled Leslie's
pain, and the
humiliation was unbearable. She would never trust a man
again. Never.
Her only consolation was that somehow, someday, she was
going to make
Oliver Russell pay for the unforgivable thing he had done
to her. She
had no idea how. With Senator Davis behind him, Oliver
would have
money and power. Then I have to find a way to have more
money and more
power, Leslie thought. But how? How?

The inauguration took place in the garden of the state capitol in
Frankfort, near the exquisite thirty-four-foot floral clock.

Jan stood at Oliver's side, proudly watching her handsome husband being
sworn in as governor of Kentucky.

If Oliver behaved himself, the next stop was the White House, her
father had assured her. And Jan intended to do everything in her power
to see that nothing went wrong. Nothing.

After the ceremony, Oliver and his father-in-law were seated in the
palatial library of the Executive Mansion, a beautiful building modeled
after the Petit Trianon, Marie Antoinette's villa near the palace of
Versailles. Senator Todd Davis looked around the luxurious room and
nodded in satisfaction. "You're going to do fine here, son. Just
fine." "I owe it all to you," Oliver said warmly. "I won't forget
that." Senator Davis waved a hand in dismissal. "Don't give it a
thought, Oliver. You're here because you deserve to be. Oh, maybe I
helped push things along a wee bit. But this is just the beginning.
I've been in politics a long time, son, and there are a few things I've
learned."

He looked over at Oliver, waiting, and Oliver said dutifully, "I'd love
to hear them, Todd." "You see, people have got it wrong. It's not who
you know," Senator Davis explained, "it's what you know about who you
know. Everybody's got a little skeleton buried somewhere.

All you
have to do is dig it up, and you'll be surprised how glad they'll be to
help you with whatever you need. I happen to know that there's a
congressman in Washington who once spent a year in a mental
institution. A representative from up North served time in a reform
school for stealing. Well, you can see what it would do to their
careers if word ever got out. But it's grist for our mills." The
senator opened an expensive leather briefcase and took out a sheaf of
papers and handed them to Oliver. "These are the people you'll be
dealing with here in Kentucky. They're powerful men and women, but
they all have Achilles' heels." He grinned. "The mayor has an
Achilles' high heel. He's a transvestite." Oliver was scanning the
papers, wide-eyed. "You keep those locked up, you hear? That's pure
gold." "Don't worry, Todd. I'll be careful." "And, son don't put too
much pressure on those people when you need something from them. Don't
break them just bend them a little." He studied Oliver a moment. "How
are you and Jan getting along?" "Great," Oliver said quickly. It was
true, in a sense. As far as Oliver was concerned, it was a marriage of
convenience, and he was careful to see that he did nothing to disrupt
it. He would never forget what his earlier indiscretion had almost
cost him.

"That's fine. Jan's happiness is very important to me." It was a
warning.

"For me, as well," Oliver said.

"By the way, how do you like Peter Tager?"

Oliver said enthusiastically, "I like him a lot. He's been a
tremendous help to me."

Senator Davis nodded. "I'm glad to hear that. You won't find anyone
better. I'm going to lend him to you, Oliver. He can smooth a lot of
paths for you."

Oliver grinned. "Great. I really appreciate that."

Senator Davis rose. "Well, I have to get back to Washington. You let
me know if you need anything."

"Thanks, Todd. I will."

On the Sunday after his meeting with Senator Davis, Oliver tried to
find Peter Tager. "He's in church, Governor." "Right. I forgot.
I'll see him tomorrow." Peter Tager went to church every Sunday with
his family, and attended a two-hour prayer meeting three times a week.
In a way, Oliver envied him. He's probably the only truly happy man
I've ever known, he thought. On Monday morning, Tager came into
Oliver's office. "You wanted to see me, Oliver?" "I need a favor.
It's personal."

Peter nodded. "Anything I can do." "I need an apartment." Tager
glanced around the large room in mock disbelief. "This place is too
small for you, Governor?" "No." Oliver looked into

Tager's one good
eye. "Sometimes I have private meetings at night. They
have to be
discreet. You know what I mean?" There was an
uncomfortable pause.
"Yes." "I want someplace away from the center of town.
Can you handle
that for me?" "I guess so." "This is just between us, of
course."
Peter Tager nodded, unhappily. One hour later, Tager
telephoned
Senator Davis in Washington. "Oliver asked me to rent an
apartment for
him, Senator. Something discreet." "Did he now? Well,
he's learning,
Peter. He's learning. Do it. Just make damned sure Jan
never hears
about it." The senator was thoughtful for a moment. "Find
him a place
out in Indian Hills. Someplace with a private entrance."
"But it's
not right for him to " "Peter just do it."

Four.

The solution to Leslie's problem had come in two disparate
items in the
Lexington Herald-Leader. The first was a long, flattering
editorial
praising Governor Oliver Russell. The last line read,
"None of us here
in Kentucky who knows him will be surprised when one day
Oliver Russell
becomes President of the United States." The item on the
next page
read: "Henry Chambers, a former Lexington resident, whose
horse
Lightning won the Kentucky Derby five years ago, and
Jessica, his third
wife, have divorced. Chambers, who now lives in Phoenix,
is the owner
and publisher of the Phoenix Star." The power of the
press. That was
real power. Katharine Graham and her Washington Post had

destroyed a
president. And that was when the idea jelled.

Leslie had spent the next two days doing research on Henry Chambers.
The Internet had some interesting information on him. Chambers was a
fifty-five-year-old philanthropist who had inherited a tobacco fortune
and had devoted most of his life to giving it away. But it was not his
money that interested Leslie. It was the fact that he owned a
newspaper and that he had just gotten a divorce.

Half an hour after her meeting with Senator Davis, Leslie walked into
Jim Bailey's office. "I'm leaving, Jim."

He looked at her sympathetically. "Of course. You need a vacation.
When you come back, we can "

"I'm not coming back."

"What? I I don't want you to go, Leslie. Running away won't solve "

"I'm not running away."

"You've made up your mind?"

"Yes."

"We're going to hate to lose you. When do you want to leave?"

"I've already left."

Leslie Stewart had given a lot of thought to the various ways in which
she could meet Henry Chambers. There were endless fin possibilities,
but she discarded them one by one. What she had in mind

had to be
planned very carefully. And then she had thought of
Senator Davis.
Davis and Chambers had the same background, traveled in
the same
circles. The two men would certainly know each other.
That was when
Leslie had decided to call the senator.

When Leslie arrived at Sky Harbor Airport in Phoenix, on
an impulse,
she walked over to the newsstand in the terminal. She
bought a copy of
the Phoenix Star and scanned it. No luck. She bought the
Arizona
Republic, and then the Phoenix Gazette, and there it was,
the
astrological column by Zoltaire. Not that I believe in
astrology, I'm
much too intelligent for that nonsense. But... FOR LEO
(JULY 23RD TO
AUGUST 22ND). JUPITER is JOINING YOUR SUN. ROMANTIC
PLANS MADE NOW

WILL BE FULFILLED. EXCELLENT PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE.
PROCEED

CAUTIOUSLY. There was a chauffeur and limousine waiting
for her at the
curb. "Miss Stewart?" "Yes." "Mr. Chambers sends his
regards and
asked me to take you to your hotel." "That's very kind of
him."
Leslie was disappointed. She had hoped that he would come
to meet her
himself.

"Mr. Chambers would like to know whether you are free to
join him for
dinner this evening." Better. Much better. "Please tell
him I would
be delighted."

At eight o'clock that evening, Leslie was dining with

Henry Chambers.
Chambers was a pleasant-looking man, with an aristocratic face, graying
brown hair, and an endearing enthusiasm. He was studying Leslie
admiringly. "Todd really meant it when he said he was doing me a
favor." Leslie smiled. "Thank you." "What made you decide to come to
Phoenix, Leslie?" You don't really want to know. "I've heard so much
about it, I thought I might enjoy living here," "It's a great place.
You'll love it. Arizona has everything the Grand Canyon, desert,
mountains. You can find anything you want here." And I have, Leslie
thought. "You'll need a place to live. I'm sure I can help you locate
something." Leslie knew the money she had would last for no more than
three months. As it turned out, her plan took no more than two
months.

Bookstores were filled with how-to books for women on how to get a man.
The various pop psychologies ranged from "Play hard to get" to "Get
them hooked in bed." Leslie followed none of that advice. She had her
own method: She teased Henry Chambers. Not physically, but mentally.
Henry had never met anyone like her. He was of the old school that
believed if a blonde was beautiful, she must be dumb. It never
occurred to him that he had always been attracted to women who were
beautiful and not overly bright. Leslie was a revelation to him. She
was intelligent and articulate and knowledgeable about an amazing range
of subjects.

They talked about philosophy and religion and history, and Henry
confided to a friend, "I think she's reading up on a lot of things so
she can keep up with me."

Henry Chambers enjoyed Leslie's company tremendously. He showed her
off to his friends and wore her on his arm like a trophy. He took her
to the Carefree Wine and Fine Art Festival and to the Actors Theater.
They watched the Phoenix Suns play at the America West Arena. They
visited the Lyon Gallery in Scottsdale, the Symphony Hall, and the
little town of Chandler to see the Doo-dah Parade. One evening, they
went to see the Phoenix Roadrunners play hockey. After the hockey
game, Henry said, "I really like you a lot, Leslie. I think we'd be
great together. I'd like to make love with you."

She took his hand in hers and said softly, "I like you, too, Henry, but
the answer is no."

The following day they had a luncheon date. Henry telephoned Leslie.
"Why don't you pick me up at the Star? I want you to see the place."

"I'd love to," Leslie said. That was what she had been waiting for.
There were two other newspapers in Phoenix, the Arizona Republic and
the Phoenix Gazette. Henry's paper, the Star, was the only one losing
money.

The offices and production plant of the Phoenix Star were smaller than

Leslie had anticipated. Henry took her on a tour, and as Leslie looked
around, she thought, This isn't going to bring down a governor or a
president. But it was a stepping-stone. She had plans for it.

Leslie was interested in everything she saw. She kept asking Henry
questions, and he kept referring them to Lyle Bannister, the managing
editor. Leslie was amazed at how little Henry seemed to know about the
newspaper business and how little he cared. It made her all the more
determined to learn everything she could.

It happened at the Borgata, a restaurant in a castle like old Italian
village setting. The dinner was superb. They had enjoyed fi4

a lobster bisque, medallions of veal with a sauce bearnaise, white
asparagus vinaigrette, and a Grand Marnier souffle. Henry Chambers was
charming and easy to be with, and it had been a beautiful evening. "I
love Phoenix," Henry was saying. "It's hard to believe that only fifty
years ago the population here was just sixty-five thousand. Now it's
over a million." Leslie was curious about something. "What made you
decide to leave Kentucky and move here, Henry?" He shrugged. "It
wasn't my decision, really. It was my damned lungs. The doctors
didn't know how long I had to live. They told me Arizona would be the
best climate for me. So I decided to spend the rest of my life
whatever that means living it up." He smiled at her. "And here we

are." He took her hand in his. "When they told me how good it would
be for me, they had no idea. You don't think I'm too old for you, do
you?" he asked anxiously. Leslie smiled. "Too young. Much too
young." Henry looked at her for a long moment. "I'm serious. Will
you marry me?" Leslie closed her eyes for a moment. She could see the
hand-painted wooden sign on the Breaks Interstate Park trail: LESLIE,
WILL YOU MARRY ME? ... "I'm afraid I can't promise you that you're
going to marry a governor, but I'm a pretty good attorney." Leslie
opened her eyes and looked up at Henry. "Yes, I want to marry you."
More than anything in the world. They were married two weeks later.

When the wedding announcement appeared in the Lexington Herald-Leader,
Senator Todd Davis studied it for a long time. "I'm sorry to bother
you, Senator, but I wonder if I could see you? I need a favor.... Do
you know Henry Chambers?... I'd appreciate it if you'd introduce me to
him."

If that's all she was up to, there would be no problem.

If that's all she was up to.

Leslie and Henry honeymooned in Paris, and wherever they went, Leslie
wondered whether Oliver and Jan had visited those same places, walked
those streets, dined there, shopped there. She pictured the two of
them together, making love, Oliver whispering the same lies into Jan's
ears that he had whispered into hers. Lies that he was

going to pay
dearly for.

Henry sincerely loved her and went out of his way to make her happy.
Under other circumstances, Leslie might have fallen in love with him,
but something deep within her had died. I can never trust any man
again.

A few days after they returned to Phoenix, Leslie surprised Henry by
saying, "Henry, I'd like to work at the paper." He laughed. "Why?"
"I think it would be interesting. I was an executive at an advertising
agency. I could probably help with that part." He protested, but in
the end, he gave in.

Henry noticed that Leslie read the Lexington Herald-Leader every day.

"Keeping up with the hometown folks?" he teased her.

"In a way," Leslie smiled. She avidly read every word that was written
about Oliver. She wanted him to be happy and successful. The bigger
they are ... When Leslie pointed out to Henry that the Star was losing
money, he laughed. "Honey, it's a drop in the bucket. I've got money
coming in from places you never even heard of. It doesn't matter."
But it mattered to Leslie. It mattered a great deal. As she began to
get more and more involved in the running of the newspaper, it seemed
to her that the biggest reason it was losing money was the unions. The
Phoenix Star's presses were outdated, but the unions refused to let the

newspaper put in new equipment, because they said it would cost union
members their jobs. They were currently negotiating a new contract
with the Star. When Leslie discussed the situation with Henry, he
said, "Why do you want to bother with stuff like that? Let's just have
fun." "I'm having fun," Leslie assured him.

Leslie had a meeting with Craig McAllister, the Star's attorney. "How
are the negotiations going?" "I wish I had better news, Mrs.
Chambers, but I'm afraid the situation doesn't look good." "We're
still in negotiation, aren't we?" "Ostensibly. But Joe Riley, the
head of the printers' union, is a stubborn son of a a stubborn man. He
won't give an inch. The pressmen's contract is up in ten days, and
Riley says if the union doesn't have a new contract by then, they're
going to walk." "Do you believe him?" "Yes. I don't like to give in
to the unions, but the reality is that without them, we have no
newspaper. They can shut us down. More than one publication has
collapsed because it tried to buck the unions." "What are they
asking?" "The usual. Shorter hours, raises, protection against future
automation...." "They're squeezing us, Craig. I don't like it."
"This is not an emotional issue, Mrs. Chambers. This is a practical
issue." "So your advice is to give in?" "I don't think we have a
choice." "Why don't I have a talk with Joe Riley?"

The meeting was set for two o'clock, and Leslie was late coming back

from lunch. When she walked into the reception office, Riley was
waiting, chatting with Leslie's secretary, Amy, a pretty, dark-haired
young woman.

Joe Riley was a rugged-looking Irishman in his middle forties. He had
been a pressman for more than fifteen years. Three years earlier he
had been appointed head of his union and had earned the reputation of
being the toughest negotiator in the business. Leslie stood there for
a moment, watching him flirting with Amy.

Riley was saying, "... and then the man turned to her and said, "That's
easy for you to say, but how will I get back?" "

Amy laughed. "Where do you hear those, Joe?"

"I get around, darling'. How about dinner tonight?"

"I'd love it."

Riley looked up and saw Leslie. "Afternoon, Mrs. Chambers."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Riley. Come in, won't you?"

Riley and Leslie were seated in the newspaper's conference room. "Would
you like some coffee?" Leslie offered.

"No, thanks."

"Anything stronger?"

He grinned. "You know it's against the rules to drink during company
hours, Mrs. Chambers."

Leslie took a deep breath. "I wanted the two of us to

have a talk
because I've heard that you're a very fair man."

fiQ

"I try to be," Riley said.

"I want you to know that I'm sympathetic to the union. I think your
men are entitled to something, but what you're asking for is
unreasonable. Some of their habits are costing us millions of dollars
a year."

"Could you be more specific?"

"I'll be glad to. They're working fewer hours of straight time and
finding ways to get on the shifts that pay overtime. Some of them put
in three shifts back to back, working the whole weekend. I believe
they call it 'going to the whips." We can't afford that anymore. We're
losing money because our equipment is outdated. If we could put in new
cold-type production "

"Absolutely not! The new equipment you want to put in would put my men
out of work, and I have no intention of letting machinery throw my men
out into the street. Your goddam machines don't have to eat, my men
do." Riley rose to his feet. "Our contract is up next week. We
either get what we want, or we walk."

When Leslie mentioned the meeting to Henry that evening, he said, "Why
do you want to get involved in all that? The unions are something we
all have to live with. Let me give you a piece of advice,

sweetheart.
You're new to all this, and you're a woman. Let the men handle it.
Let's not " He stopped, out of breath. "Are you all right?"

He nodded. "I saw my stupid doctor today, and he thinks I should get
an oxygen tank."

"I'll arrange it," Leslie said. "And I'm going to get you a nurse so
that when I'm not here "

"No! I don't need a nurse. I'm I'm just a little tired."

"Come on, Henry. Let's get you into bed."

Three days later, when Leslie called an emergency board meeting, Henry
said, "You go, baby. I'll just stay here and take it easy." The
oxygen tank had helped, but he was feeling weak and depressed.

Leslie telephoned Henry's doctor. "He's losing too much weight and
he's in pain. There must be something you can do."

"Mrs. Chambers, we're doing everything we can. Just see that he gets
plenty of rest and stays on the medication."

Leslie sat there, watching Henry lying in bed, coughing.

"Sorry about the meeting," Henry said. "You handle the board. There's
nothing anyone can do, anyway."

She only smiled. Five.

The members of the board were gathered around the table in the
conference room, sipping coffee and helping themselves to

bagels and
cream cheese, waiting for Leslie. When she arrived, she said, "Sorry
to keep you waiting, ladies and gentlemen. Henry sends his regards."
Things had changed since the first board meeting Leslie had attended.
The board had snubbed her then, and treated her as an interloper. But
gradually, as Leslie had learned enough about the business to make
valuable suggestions, she had won their respect. Now, as the meeting
was about to begin, Leslie turned to Amy, who was serving coffee. "Amy,
I would like you to stay for the meeting." Amy looked at her in
surprise. "I'm afraid my shorthand isn't very good, Mrs. Chambers.
Cynthia can do a better job of "

"I don't want you to take minutes of the meeting. Just make a note of
whatever resolutions we pass at the end."

"Yes, ma'am." Amy picked up a notebook and pen and sat in a chair
against the wall.

Leslie turned to face the board. "We have a problem. Our contract
with the pressmen's union is almost up. We've been negotiating for
three months now, and we haven't been able to reach an agreement. We
have to make a decision, and we have to make it fast. You've all seen
the reports I sent you. I'd like to have your opinions."

She looked at Gene Osborne, a partner in a local law firm.

"If you ask me, Leslie, I think they're getting too damn much already.
Give them what they want now, and tomorrow they'll want

more."

Leslie nodded and looked at Aaron Drexel, the owner of a
local
department store. "Aaron?"

"I have to agree. There's a hell of a lot of
featherbedding going on.
If we give them something, we should get something in
return. In my
opinion, we can afford a strike, and they can't."

The comments from the others were similar.

Leslie said, "I have to disagree with all of you." They
looked at her
in surprise. "I think we should let them have what they
want."

"That's crazy."

"They'll wind up owning the newspaper."

"There won't be any stopping them." "You can't give in to
them."
Leslie let them speak. When they had finished, she said,
"Joe Riley is
a fair man. He believes in what he's asking for." Seated
against the
wall, Amy was following the discussion, astonished. One
of the women
spoke up. "I'm surprised you're taking his side, Leslie."
"I'm not
taking anyone's side. I just think we have to be
reasonable about
this. Anyway, it's not my decision. Let's take a vote."
She turned to
look at Amy. "This is what I want you to put in the
record." "Yes,
ma'am." Leslie turned back to the group. "All those
opposed to the
union demands, raise your hands." Eleven hands went into
the air.
"Let the record show that I voted yes and that the rest of

the
committee has voted not to accept the union demands." Amy was writing
in her notebook, a thoughtful expression on her face. Leslie said,
"Well, that's it then." She rose. "If there's no further business
..." The others got to their feet. "Thank you all for coming." She
watched them leave, then turned to Amy. "Would you type that up,
please?" "Right away, Mrs. Chambers." Leslie headed for her
office.

The telephone call came a short time later.

"Mr. Riley is on line one," Amy said.

Leslie picked up the telephone. "Hello."

"Joe Riley. I just wanted to thank you for what you tried to do."

Leslie said, "I don't understand ..."

"The board meeting. I heard what happened."

Leslie said, "I'm surprised, Mr. Riley. That was a private
meeting."

Joe Riley chuckled. "Let's just say I have friends in low places.
Anyway, I thought what you tried to do was great. Too bad it didn't
work."

There was a brief silence, then Leslie said slowly, "Mr. Riley ...
what if I could make it work?"

"What do you mean?"

"I have an idea. I'd rather not discuss it on the phone. Could we
meet somewhere ... discreetly?"

There was a pause. "Sure. Where did you have in mind?"

"Someplace where neither of us will be recognized."

"What about meeting at the Golden Cup?"

"Right. I'll be there in an hour."

"I'll see you."

The Golden Cup was an infamous cafe in the seedier section of Phoenix,
near the railroad tracks, an area police warned tourists to stay away
from. Joe Riley was seated at a corner booth when Leslie walked in. He
rose as she approached him.

"Thank you for being here," Leslie said. They sat down. "I came
because you said there might be a way for me to get my contract."
"There is. I think the board is being stupid and shortsighted. I
tried to talk to them, but they wouldn't listen." He nodded, "I know.
You advised them to give us the new contract." "That's right. They
don't realize how important you pressmen are to our newspaper." He was
studying her, puzzled. "But if they voted you down, how can we ... ?"
"The only reason they voted me down is that they're not taking your
union seriously. If you want to avoid a long strike, and maybe the
death of the paper, you have to show them you mean business." "How do
you mean?" Leslie said nervously, "What I'm telling you is very

confidential, but it's the only way that you're going to get what you
want. The problem is simple. They think you're bluffing. They don't
believe you mean business. You have to show them that you do. Your
contract is up this Friday at midnight." "Yes ..." "They'll expect
you just to quietly walk out." She leaned forward. "Don't!" He was
listening intently. "Show them that they can't run the Star without
you. Don't just go out like lambs. Do some damage." His eyes
widened. "I don't mean anything serious," Leslie said quickly. "Just
enough to show them that you mean business. Cut a few cables, put a
press or two out of commission. Let them learn that they need you to
operate them. Everything can be repaired in a day or two, but
meanwhile, you'll have scared them into their senses. They'll finally
know what they're dealing with."

Joe Riley sat there for a long time, studying Leslie. "You're a
remarkable lady."

"Not really. I thought it over, and I have a very simple choice. You
can cause a little damage that can be easily corrected, and force the
board to deal with you, or you can walk out quietly and resign yourself
to a long strike that the paper may never recover from. All I care
about is protecting the paper."

A slow smile lit Riley's face. "Let me buy you a cup of coffee, Mrs.
Chambers."

"We're striking!" Friday night, at one minute past midnight, under Joe Riley's direction, the pressmen attacked. They stripped parts from the machines, overturned tables full of equipment, and set two printing presses on fire. A guard who tried to stop them was badly beaten. The pressmen, who had started out merely to disable a few presses, got caught up in the fever of the excitement, and they became more and more destructive. "Let's show the bastards that they can't shove us around!" one of the men cried. "There's no paper without us!"

"We're the Star!"

Cheers went up. The men attacked harder. The pressroom was turning into a shambles.

In the midst of the wild excitement, floodlights suddenly flashed on from the four corners of the room. The men stopped, looking around in bewilderment. Near the doors, television cameras were recording the fiery scene and the destruction. Next to them were reporters from the Arizona Republic, the Phoenix Gazette, and several news services, covering the havoc. There were at least a dozen policemen and firemen.

Joe Riley was looking around in shock. How the hell had they all gotten here so fast? As the police started to close in and the firemen turned on their hoses, the answer suddenly came to Riley, and he felt as though someone had kicked him in the stomach. Leslie

Chambers had
set him up! When these pictures of the destruction the union had
caused got out, there would be no sympathy for them. Public opinion
would turn against them. The bitch had planned this all along.... The
television pictures were aired within the hour, and the radio waves
were filled with details of the wanton destruction. News services
around the world printed the story, and they all carried the theme of
the vicious employees who had turned on the hand that fed them. It was
a public relations triumph for the Phoenix Star.

Leslie had prepared well. Earlier, she had secretly sent some of the
Star's executives to Kansas to learn how to run the giant presses, and
to teach nonunion employees cold-type production. Immediately after
the sabotage incident, two other striking unions, the mailers and
photoengravers, came to terms with the Star.

With the unions defeated, and the way open to modernize the paper's
technology, profits began to soar. Overnight, productivity jumped 20
percent.

The morning after the strike, Amy was fired.

On a late Friday afternoon, two years from the date of their wedding,
Henry had a touch of indigestion. By Saturday morning, it had become
chest pains, and Leslie called for an ambulance to rush him to the
hospital. On Sunday, Henry Chambers passed away.

He left his entire estate to Leslie.

The Monday after the funeral, Craig McAllister came to see Leslie. "I
wanted to go over some legal matters with you, but if it's too soon "
"No," Leslie said. "I'm all right." Henry's death had affected Leslie
more than she had expected. He had been a dear, sweet man, and she had
used him because she wanted him to help her get revenge against
Oliver.

And somehow, in Leslie's mind, Henry's death became another reason to
destroy Oliver.

"What do you want to do with the Star'?" McAllister asked. "I don't
imagine you'll want to spend your time running it."

"That's exactly what I intend to do. We're going to expand."

Leslie sent for a copy of the Managing Editor, the trade magazine that
lists newspaper brokers all over the United States. Leslie selected
Dirks, Van Essen and Associates in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

"This is Mrs. Henry Chambers. I'm interested in acquiring another
newspaper, and I wondered what might be available...."

It turned out to be the Sun in Hammond, Oregon.

"I'd like you to fly up there and take a look at it," Leslie told
McAllister.

Two days later, McAllister telephoned Leslie. "You can forget about
the Sun, Mrs. Chambers."

"What's the problem?"

"The problem is that Hammond is a two-newspaper town. The daily
circulation of the Sun is fifteen thousand. The other newspaper, the
Hammond Chronicle, has a circulation of twenty-eight thousand, almost
double. And the owner of the Sun is asking five million dollars. The
deal doesn't make any sense."

Leslie was thoughtful for a moment. "Wait for me," she said. "I'm on
my way."

Leslie spent the following two days examining the newspaper and
studying its books.

"There's no way the Sun can compete with the Chronicle," McAllister
assured her. "The Chronicle keeps growing. The Sun's circulation has
gone down every year for the past five years."

"I know," Leslie said. "I'm going to buy it."

He looked at her in surprise. "You're going to what?"

"I'm going to buy it."

The deal was completed in three days. The owner of the Sun was
delighted to get rid of it. "I suckered the lady into making a deal,"
he crowed. "She paid me the full five million." Walt Meriwether, the
owner of the Hammond Chronicle, came to call on Leslie. "I understand
you're my new competitor," he said genially. Leslie nodded. "That's
right." "If things don't work out here for you, maybe you'd be

interested in selling the Sun to me." Leslie smiled. "And if things
do work out, perhaps you'd be interested in selling the Chronicle to
me."

Meriwether laughed. "Sure. Lots of luck, Mrs. Chambers."

When Meriwether got back to the Chronicle, he said confidently, "In six
months, we're going to own the Sun."

Leslie returned to Phoenix and talked to Lyle Bannister, the Star's
managing editor. "You're going with me to Hammond, Oregon. I want you
to run the newspaper there until it gets on its feet."

"I talked to Mr. McAllister," Bannister said. "The paper has no feet.
He said it's a disaster waiting to happen."

She studied him a moment. "Humor me."

In Oregon, Leslie called a staff meeting of the employees of the Sun.
"We're going to operate a little differently from now on," she informed
them. "This is a two-newspaper town, and we're going to own them
both." Derek Zornes, the managing editor of the Sun, said, "Excuse me,
Mrs. Chambers. I'm not sure you understand the situation. Our
circulation is way below the Chronick's, and we're slipping every
month. There's no way we can ever catch up to it." "We're not only
going to catch up to it," Leslie assured him, "we're going to put the
Chronicle out of business."

The men in the room looked at one another and they all had

the same
thought: Females and amateurs should stay the hell out of the newspaper
business.

"How do you plan to do that?" Zornes asked politely.

"Have you ever watched a bullfight?" Leslie asked.

He blinked. "A bullfight? No ..."

"Well, when the bull rushes into the ring, the matador doesn't go for
the kill right away. He bleeds the bull until it's weak enough to be
killed."

Zornes was trying not to laugh. "And we're going to bleed the
Chronicle?"

"Exactly."

"How are we going to do that?"

"Starting Monday, we're cutting the price of the Sun from thirty-five
cents to twenty cents. We're cutting our advertising rates by thirty
percent. Next week, we're starting a giveaway contest where our
readers can win free trips all over the world. We'll begin publicizing
the contest immediately."

When the employees gathered later to discuss the meeting, the consensus
was that their newspaper had been bought by a crazy woman.

The bleeding began, but it was the Sun that was being bled.

McAllister asked Leslie, "Do you have any idea how much money the Sun

is losing?"

"I know exactly how much it's losing," Leslie said.

"How long do you plan to go on with this?"

"Until we win," Leslie said. "Don't worry. We will."

But Leslie was worried. The losses were getting heavier every week.
Circulation continued to dwindle, and advertisers' reactions to the
rate reduction had been lukewarm.

"Your theory's not working," McAllister said. "We've got to cut our
losses. I suppose you can keep pumping in money, but what's the
point?"

The following week, the circulation stopped dropping.

It took eight weeks for the Sun to begin to rise.

The reduction in the price of the newspaper and in the cost of
advertising was attractive, but what made the circulation of the Sun
move up was the giveaway contest. It ran for twelve weeks, and
entrants had to compete every week. The prizes were cruises to the
South Seas and trips to London and Paris and Rio. As the prizes were
handed out and publicized with front-page photographs of the winners,
the circulation of the Sun began to explode.

"You took a hell of a gamble," Craig McAllister said grudgingly, "but
it's working."

"It wasn't a gamble," Leslie said. "People can't resist getting

something for nothing."

When Walt Meriwether was handed the latest circulation figures, he was
furious. For the first time in years, the Sun was ahead of the
Chronicle.

"All right," Meriwether said grimly. "Two can play that stupid game. I
want you to cut our advertising rates and start some kind of
contest."

But it was too late. Eleven months after Leslie had bought the Sun,
Walt Meriwether came to see her.

"I'm selling out," he said curtly. "Do you want to buy the
Chronicle?"

"Yes."

The day the contract for the Chronicle was signed, Leslie called in her
staff.

"Starting Monday," she said, "we raise the price of the Sun, double our
advertising rates, and stop the contest."

One month later, Leslie said to Craig McAllister, "The Evening Standard
in Detroit is up for sale. It owns a television station, too. I think
we should make a deal." McAllister protested. "Mrs. Chambers, we
don't know anything about television, and " "Then we'll have to learn,
won't we?" The empire Leslie needed was beginning to build.

Six.

Oliver's days were full, and he loved every minute of what he was
doing. There were political appointments to be made, legislation to be
put forward, appropriations to be approved, meetings and speeches and
press interviews. The State Journal in Frankfort, the Herald-Leader in
Lexington, and the Louisville Courier-Journal gave him glowing reports.
He was earning the reputation of being a governor who got things done.
Oliver was swept up in the social life of the super wealthy and he knew
that a large part of that was because he was married to the daughter of
Senator Todd Davis.

Oliver enjoyed living in Frankfort. It was a lovely, historic city
nestled in a scenic river valley among the rolling hills of Kentucky
fabled bluegrass region. He wondered what it would be like to live in
Washington, D.C.

The busy days merged into weeks, and the weeks merged into months.
Oliver began the last year of his term.

Oliver had made Peter Tager his press secretary. He was the perfect
choice. Tager was always forthright with the press, and because of the
decent, old-fashioned values he stood for and liked to talk about, he
gave the party substance and dignity. Peter Tager and his black eye
patch became almost as well recognized as Oliver.

Todd Davis made it a point to fly down to Frankfort to see Oliver at
least once a month.

He said to Peter Tager, "When you've got a Thoroughbred running, you
have to keep an eye on him to make sure he doesn't lose his timing."

On a chilly evening in October, Oliver and Senator Davis were seated in
Oliver's study. The two men and Jan had gone out to dinner at
Gabriel's and had returned to the Executive Mansion. Jan had left the
men to talk. "Jan seems very happy, Oliver. I'm pleased." "I try to
make her happy, Todd." Senator Davis looked at Oliver and wondered how
often he used the apartment. "She loves you a lot, son." "And I love
her." Oliver sounded very sincere.

Senator Davis smiled. "I'm glad to hear that. She's already
redecorating the White House." Oliver's heart skipped a beat. "I beg
your pardon?" "Oh, didn't I tell you? It's begun. Your name's
becoming a byword in Washington. We're going to begin our campaign the
first of the year." Oliver was almost afraid to ask the next question.
"Do you honestly think I have a chance, Todd?" "The word 'chance'
implies a gamble, and I don't gamble, son. I won't get involved in
anything unless I know it's a sure thing." Oliver took a deep breath.
"You can be the most important man in the world." "I want you to know
how very much I appreciate everything you've done for me, Todd." Todd
patted Oliver's arm. "It's a man's duty to help his son-in-law, isn't
it?" The emphasis on "son-in-law" was not lost on Oliver. The senator

said casually, "By the way, Oliver, I was very disappointed that your
legislature passed that tobacco tax bill." "That money will take care
of the shortfall in our fiscal budget, and " "But of course you're
going to veto it." Oliver stared at him. "Veto it?" The senator gave
him a small smile. "Oliver, I want you to know that I'm not thinking
about myself. But I have a lot of friends who invested their
hard-earned money in tobacco plantations, and I wouldn't want to see
them get hurt by oppressive new taxes, would you?"

There was a silence.

"Would you, Oliver?"

"No," Oliver finally said. "I guess it wouldn't be fair."

"I appreciate that. I really do."

Oliver said, "I had heard that you'd sold your tobacco plantations,
Todd."

Todd Davis looked at him, surprised. "Why would I want to do that?"

"Well, the tobacco companies are taking a beating in the courts. Sales
are way down, and "

"You're talking about the United States, son. There's a great big
world out there. Wait until our advertising campaigns start rolling in
China and Africa and India." He looked at his watch and rose. "I have
to head back to Washington. I have a committee meeting."

"Have a good flight."

Senator Davis smiled. "Now I will, son. Now I will."

Oliver was upset. "What the hell am I going to do, Peter? The tobacco
tax is by far the most popular measure the legislature has passed this
year. What excuse do I have for vetoing it?" Peter Tager took several
sheets of paper from his pocket. "All the answers are right here,
Oliver. I've discussed it with the senator. You won't have any
problem. I've set up a press conference for four o'clock." Oliver
studied the papers. Finally, he nodded. "This is good."

"It's what I do. Is there anything else you need me for?" "No. Thank
you. I'll see you at four." Peter Tager started to leave. "Peter."
Tager turned. "Yes?" "Tell me something. Do you think I really have
a chance of becoming president?" "What does the senator say?" "He
says I do." Tager walked back to the desk. "I've known Senator Davis
for many years, Oliver. In all that time, he hasn't been wrong once.
Not once. The man has incredible instincts. If Todd Davis says you're
going to be the next President of the United States, you can bet the
farm on it." There was a knock at the door. "Come in." The door
opened, and an attractive young secretary walked in, carrying some
faxes. She was in her early twenties, bright and eager. "Oh, excuse
me, Governor. I didn't know you were in a " "That's all right,
Miriam." Tager smiled. "Hi, Miriam." "Hello, Mr. Tager." Oliver
said, "I don't know what I'd do without Miriam. She does

everything
for me." Miriam blushed. "If there's nothing else " She put the faxes
on Oliver's desk and turned and hurried out of the office.

"That's a pretty woman," Tager said. He looked over at Oliver.

"Yes."

"Oliver, you are being careful, aren't you?"

"Of course I am. That's why I had you get that little apartment for
me."

"I mean big-time careful. The stakes have gone up. The next time you
get horny, just stop and think about whether a Miriam or Alice or Karen
is worth the Oval Office."

"I know what you're saying, Peter, and I appreciate it. But you don't
have to worry about me."

"Good." Tager looked at his watch. "I have to go. I'm taking Betsy
and the kids out to lunch." He smiled. "Did I tell you what Rebecca
did this morning? She's my five-year-old. There was a tape of a kid's
show she wanted to watch at eight o'clock this morning. Betsy said,
"Darling, I'll run it for you after lunch." Rebecca looked at her and
said, "Mama, I want lunch now." Pretty smart, huh?"

Oliver had to smile at the pride in Tager's voice.

At ten o'clock that evening, Oliver walked into the den where Jan was
reading and said, "Honey, I have to leave. I have a conference to go

to." Jan looked up. "At this time of night?" He sighed. "I'm afraid
so. There's a budget committee meeting in the morning, and they want
to brief me before the meeting."

"You're working too hard. Try to come home early, will you, Oliver?"
She hesitated a moment. "You've been out a lot lately."

He wondered whether that was intended as a warning. He walked over to
her, leaned down, and kissed her. "Don't worry, honey. I'll be home
as early as I can."

Downstairs Oliver said to his chauffeur, "I won't need you tonight. I'm
taking the small car."

"Yes, Governor."

"You're late, darling." Miriam was naked.

He grinned and walked over to her. "Sorry about that. I'm glad you
didn't start without me."

She smiled. "Hold me."

He took her in his arms and held her close, her warm body pressed
against his.

"Get undressed. Hurry."

Afterward, he said, "How would you like to move to Washington, D.C.?"
Miriam sat up in bed. "Are you serious?" "Very. I may be going
there. I want you to be with me." "If your wife ever found out about
us ..." "She won't." "Why Washington?"

"I can't tell you that now. All I can say is that it's going to be
very exciting." "I'll go anywhere you want me to go, as long as you
love me." "You know I love you." The words slipped out easily, as
they had so many times in the past. "Make love to me again." "Just a
second. I have something for you." He got up and walked over to the
jacket he had flung over a chair. He took a small bottle out of his
pocket and poured the contents into a glass. It was a clear liquid.
"Try this." "What is it?" Miriam asked. "You'll like it. I promise."
He lifted the glass and drank half of it. Miriam took a sip, then
swallowed the rest of it. She smiled. "It's not bad." "It's going to
make you feel real sexy." "I already feel real sexy. Come back to
bed." They were making love again when she gasped and said, "I I'm not
feeling well." She began to pant. "I can't breathe." Her eyes were
closing. "Miriam!" There was no response. She fell back on the bed.
"Miriam!" She lay there, unconscious. Son of a bitch! Why are you
doing this to me? He got up and began to pace. He had given the
liquid to a dozen women, and only once had it harmed anyone. He had to
be careful. Unless he handled this right, it was going to be the end of
everything. All his dreams, everything he had worked for. He could not
let that happen. He stood at the side of the bed, looking down at her.
He felt her pulse. She was still breathing, thank God. But he could
not let her be discovered in this apartment. It would be traced back

to him. He had to leave her somewhere where she would be found and be
given medical help. He could trust her not to reveal his name.

It took him almost half an hour to get her dressed and to remove all
traces of her from his apartment. He opened the door a crack to make
sure that the hallway was empty, then picked her up, put her over his
shoulder, and carried her downstairs and put her in the car. It was
almost midnight, and the streets were deserted. It was beginning to
rain. He drove to Juniper Hill Park, and when he was sure that no one
was in sight, he lifted Miriam out of the car and gently laid her down
on a park bench. He hated to leave her there, but he had no choice.
None. His whole future was at stake.

There was a public phone booth a few feet away. He hurried over to it
and dialed 911.

Jan was waiting up for Oliver when he returned home. "It's after
midnight," she said. "What took you ?" "I'm sorry, darling. We got
into a long, boring discussion on the budget, and well, everyone had a
different opinion." "You look pale," Jan said. "You must be
exhausted." "I am a little tired," he admitted.

She smiled suggestively. "Let's go to bed." He kissed her on the
forehead. "I've really got to get some sleep, Jan. That meeting
knocked me out."

The story was on the front page of the State Journal the

following
morning:

GOVERNOR'S SECRETARY FOUND UNCONSCIOUS IN PARK.

At two o'clock this morning, police found the unconscious woman, Miriam
Friedland, lying on the bench in the rain and immediately called for an
ambulance. She was taken to Memorial Hospital, where her condition is
said to be critical.

As Oliver was reading the story, Peter came hurrying into his office,
carrying a copy of the newspaper.

"Have you seen this?"

"Yes. It's it's terrible. The press has been calling all morning."

"What do you suppose happened?" Tager asked.

Oliver shook his head. "I don't know. I just talked to the hospital.
She's in a coma. They're trying to learn what caused it. The hospital
is going to let me know as soon as they find out."

Tager looked at Oliver. "I hope she's going to be all right."

Leslie Chambers missed seeing the newspaper stories. She was in
Brazil, buying a television station.

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The telephone call from the hospital came the following day. "Governor,
we've just finished the laboratory tests. She's ingested a substance
called methylenedioxymethamphetamine, commonly known as

Ecstasy. She
took it in liquid form, which is even more lethal."

"What's her condition?"

"I'm afraid it's critical. She's in a coma. She could wake up or " He
hesitated. "It could go the other way."

"Please keep me informed."

"Of course. You must be very concerned, Governor."

"I am."

Oliver Russell was in a conference when a secretary buzzed. "Excuse
me, Governor. There's a telephone call for you." "I told you no
interruptions, Heather." "It's Senator Davis on line three." "Oh."
Oliver turned to the men in the room. "We'll finish this later,
gentlemen. If you'll excuse me ..." He watched them leave the room,
and when the door closed behind them, he picked up the telephone.
"Todd?" "Oliver, what's this about a secretary of yours found drugged
on a park bench?" "Yes," Oliver said. "It's a terrible thing, Todd.
I " "How terrible?" Senator Davis demanded.

"What do you mean?" "You know damn well what I mean." "Todd, you
don't think I I swear I don't know anything about what happened." "I
hope not." The senator's voice was grim. "You know how fast gossip
gets around in Washington, Oliver. It's the smallest town in America.
We don't want anything negative linked to you. We're getting ready to
make our move. I'd be very, very upset if you did

anything stupid."
"I promise you, I'm clean." "Just make sure you keep it that way."
"Of course I will. I " The line went dead. Oliver sat there thinking.
I'll have to be more careful. I can't let anything stop me now. He
glanced at his watch, then reached for the remote control that turned
on the television set. The news was on. On the screen was a picture
of a besieged street, with snipers shooting at random from buildings.
The sound of mortar fire could be heard in the background. An
attractive young female reporter, dressed in battle fatigues and
holding a microphone, was saying, "The new treaty is supposed to take
effect at midnight tonight, but regardless of whether it holds, it can
never bring back the peaceful villages in this war-torn country or
restore the lives of the innocents who have been swept up in the
ruthless reign of terror." The scene shifted to a close-up of Dana
Evans, a passionate, lovely young woman in a flak jacket and combat
boots. "The people here are hungry and tired. They ask for only one
thing peace. Will it come? Only time will tell. This is Dana

Evans reporting from Sarajevo for WTE, Washington Tribune Enterprises."
The scene dissolved into a commercial. Dana Evans was a foreign
correspondent for the Washington Tribune Enterprises Broadcasting
System. She reported the news every day, and Oliver tried not to miss
her broadcasts. She was one of the best reporters on the air. She's a

great-looking woman, Oliver thought, not for the first time. Why the
hell would someone that young and attractive want to be in the middle
of a shooting war?

Seven.

Dana Evans was an army brat, the daughter of a colonel who traveled
from base to base as an armaments instructor. By the time Dana was
eleven years old, she had lived in five American cities and in four
foreign countries. She had moved with her father and mother to the
Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, Fort Benning in Georgia, Fort Hood
in Texas, Fort Leavenworth in Kansas, and Fort Mon-mouth in New Jersey.
She had gone to schools for officers' children at Camp Zama in Japan,
Chiemsee in Germany, Camp Darby in Italy, and Fort Buchanan in Puerto
Rico. Dana was an only child, and her friends were the army personnel
and their families who were stationed at the various postings. She was
precocious, cheerful, and outgoing, but her mother worried about the
fact that Dana was not having a normal childhood.

"I know that moving every six months must be terribly hard on you,
darling," her mother said.

Dana looked at her mother, puzzled. "Why?"

Whenever Dana's father was assigned to a new post, Dana was thrilled.
"We're going to move again!" she would exclaim.

Unfortunately, although Dana enjoyed the constant moving, her mother

hated it.

When Dana was thirteen, her mother said, "I can't live like a gypsy any
longer. I want a divorce."

Dana was horrified when she heard the news. Not about the divorce so
much, but by the fact that she would no longer be able to travel around
the world with her father.

"Where am I going to live?" Dana asked her mother.

"In Claremont, California. I grew up there. It's a beautiful little
town. You'll love it."

Dana's mother had been right about Claremont's being a beautiful little
town. She was wrong about Dana's loving it. Claremont was at the base
of the San Gabriel Mountains in Los Angeles County, with a population
of about thirty-three thousand. Its streets were lined with lovely
trees and it had the feel of a quaint college community. Dana hated
it. The change from being a world traveler to settling down in a small
town brought on a severe case of culture shock.

"Are we going to live here forever?" Dana asked gloomily.

"Why, darling?"

"Because it's too small for me. I need a bigger town."

On Dana's first day at school, she came home depressed. "What's the
matter? Don't you like your school?" Dana sighed. "It's all right,
but it's full of kids." Dana's mother laughed. "They'll get over

that, and so will you."

Dana went on to Claremont High School and became a reporter for the
Woljpacket, the school newspaper. She found that she enjoyed newspaper
work, but she desperately missed traveling.

"When I grow up," Dana said, "I'm going to go all over the world
again."

When Dana was eighteen, she enrolled in Claremont McKenna College,
majored in journalism, and became a reporter for the college newspaper,
the Forum. The following year, she was made editor of the paper.

Students were constantly coming to her for favors. "Our sorority is
having a dance next week, Dana. Would you mention it in the paper ...
?"

"The debating club is having a meeting Tuesday...." "Could you review
the play the drama club is putting on...?"

"We need to raise funds for the new library...."

It was endless, but Dana enjoyed it enormously. She was in a position
to help people, and she liked that. In her senior year, Dana decided
that she wanted a newspaper career.

"I'll be able to interview important people all over the world," Dana
told her mother. "It will be like helping to make history."

Growing up, whenever young Dana looked in a mirror, she became

depressed. Too short, too thin, too flat. Every other girl was
awesomely beautiful. It was some kind of California law. I'm an ugly
duckling in a land of swans, she thought. She made it a point to avoid
looking in mirrors. If Dana had looked, she would have realized that
at the age of fourteen, her body was beginning to blossom. At the age
of sixteen, she had become very attractive. When she was seventeen,
boys began seriously to pursue her. There was something about her
eager, heart-shaped face, large inquisitive eyes, and husky laugh that
was both adorable and a challenge.

Dana had known since she was twelve how she wanted to lose her
virginity. It would be on a beautiful, moon-lit night on some faraway
tropical island, with the waves gently lapping against the shore. There
would be soft music playing in the background. A handsome,
sophisticated stranger would approach her and look deeply into her
eyes, into her soul, and he would take her in his arms without a word
and suavely carry her to a nearby palm tree. They would get undressed
and make love and the music in the background would swell to a
climax.

She actually lost her virginity in the back of an old Chevrolet, after
a school dance, to a skinny eighteen-year-old redhead named Richard
Dobbins, who worked on the Forum with her. He gave Dana his ring and a
month later, moved to Milwaukee with his parents. Dana never heard

from him again.

The month before she was graduated from college with a
B.A. in
journalism, Dana went down to the local newspaper, the
Claremont
Examiner, to see about a job as a reporter. A man in the
personnel
office looked over her resume. "So you were the editor of
the Forum,
eh?" Dana smiled modestly. "That's right." "Okay.
You're in luck.
We're a little short-handed right now. We'll give you a
try." Dana
was thrilled. She had already made a list of the
countries she wanted
to cover: Russia ... China ... Africa.... "I know I can't
start as a
foreign correspondent," Dana said, "but as soon as "
"Right. You'll be
working here as a gofer. You'll see that the editors have
coffee in
the morning. They like it strong, by the way. And you'll
run copy
down to the printing presses."

Dana stared at him in shock. "I can't "

He leaned forward, frowning. "You can't what?"

"I can't tell you how glad I am to have this job."

The reporters all complimented Dana on her coffee, and she
became the
best runner the paper had ever had. She was at work early
every day
and made friends with everyone. She was always eager to
help out. She
knew that was the way to get ahead.

The problem was that at the end of six months, Dana was
still a gofer.
She went to see Bill Crowell, the managing editor.

"I really think I'm ready," Dana said earnestly. "If you give me an
assignment, I'll "

He did not even look up. "There's no opening yet. My coffee's
cold."

It isn't fair, Dana thought. They won't even give me a chance. Dana
had heard a line that she firmly believed in. "If something can stop
you, you might as well let it." Well, nothing's going to stop me, Dana
thought. Nothing. But how am I going to get started?

One morning, as Dana was walking through the deserted Teletype room,
carrying cups of hot coffee, a police scanner print out was coming over
the wires. Curious, Dana walked over and read it:

ASSOCIATED PRESS CLARE MONT CALIFORNIA. IN CLARE MONT THIS MORNING,

THERE WAS AN ATTEMPTED KIDNAPPING. A SIX-YEAR-OLD BOY WAS PICKED UP
BY

A STRANGER AND .. .

Dana read the rest of the story, wide-eyed. She took a deep breath,
ripped the story from the teletype, and put it in her pocket. No one
else had seen it.

Dana hurried into Bill Crowell's office, breathless. "Mr. Crowell,
someone tried to kidnap a little boy in Claremont this morning. He
offered to take him on a pony ride. The boy wanted some candy first,
and the kidnapper took him to a candy store, where the

owner recognized
the boy. The owner called the police and the kidnapper
fled."

Bill Crowell was excited. "There was nothing on the
wires. How did
you hear about this?"

"I I happened to be in the store, and they were talking
about it and
"

"I'll get a reporter over there right away."

"Why don't you let me cover it?" Dana said quickly. "The
owner of the
candy store knows me. He'll talk to me."

He studied Dana a moment and said reluctantly, "All
right."

Dana interviewed the owner of the candy store, and her
story appeared
on the front page of the Claremont Examiner the next day
and was well
received.

"That wasn't a bad job," Bill Crowell told her. "Not bad
at all."

"Thank you."

It was almost a week before Dana found herself alone again
in the
teletype room. There was a story coming in on the wire
from the
Associated Press:

POMONA, CALIFORNIA: FEMALE JUDO INSTRUCTOR CAPTURES
WOULD-BE RAPIST.

Perfect, Dana decided. She tore off the printout,
crumpled it, stuffed
it in her pocket, and hurried in to see Bill Crowell. "My

old roommate
just called me," Dana said excitedly. "She was looking out the window
and saw a woman attack a would-be rapist. I'd like to cover it."
Crowell looked at her a moment. "Go ahead." Dana drove to Pomona to
get an interview with the judo instructor, and again her story made the
front page. Bill Crowell asked Dana to come into his office. "How
would you like to have a regular beat?" Dana was thrilled. "Great!"
It's begun, she thought. My career has finally begun. The following
day, the Claremont Examiner was sold to the Washington Tribune in
Washington, D.C.

When the news of the sale came out, most of the Claremont Examiner
employees were dismayed. It was inevitable that there would be
downsizing and that some of them would lose their jobs. Dana did not
think of it that way. I work for the Washington Tribune now, she
thought, and the next logical thought was, Why don't I go to work at
its headquarters? She marched into Bill Crowell's office. "I'd like a
ten-day leave." He looked at her curiously. "Dana, most of the people
around here won't go to the bathroom because they're scared to death
that their desks won't be there when they get back. Aren't you
worried?" "Why should I be? I'm the best reporter you have," she said
confidently. "I'm going to get a job at the Washington Tribune." "Are
you serious?" He saw her expression. "You're serious." He sighed.
"All right. Try to see Matt Baker. He's in charge of

Washington
Tribune Enterprises newspapers, TV stations, radio,
everything." "Matt
Baker. Right."

Eight.

Washington, D.C." was a much larger city than Dana bad
imagined. This
was the power center of the world, and Dana could feel the
electricity
in the air. This is where I belong, she thought happily.
Her first
move was to check into the Stouffer Renaissance Hotel.
She looked up
the address of the Washington Tribune and headed there.
The Tribune
was located on 6th Street and took up the entire block.
It consisted
of four separate buildings that seemed to reach to
infinity. Dana
found the main lobby and confidently walked up to the
uniformed guard
behind the desk. "Can I help you, miss?" "I work here.
That is, I
work for the Tribune. I'm here to see Matt Baker."

"Do you have an appointment?" Dana hesitated. "Not yet,
but " "Come
back when you have one." He turned his attention to
several men who
had come up to the desk. "We have an appointment with the
head of the
circulation department," one of the men said. "Just a
moment, please."
The guard dialed a number. In the background, one of the
elevators had
arrived and people were getting out. Dana casually headed
for it. She
stepped inside, praying that it would go up before the
guard noticed
her. A woman got into the elevator and pressed the
button, and they
started up. "Excuse me," Dana said. "What floor is Matt

Baker on?"
"Third." She looked at Dana. "You're not wearing a pass." "I lost
it," Dana said. When the elevator reached the third floor, Dana got
out. She stood there, speechless at the scale of what she was seeing.
She was looking at a sea of cubicles. It seemed as though there were
hundreds of them, occupied by thousands of people. There were
different-colored signs over each cubicle. EDITORIAL . ART .. . METRO
.. . SPORTS .. . CALENDAR .. . Dana stopped a man hurrying by. "Excuse
me. Where's Mr. Baker's office?" "Matt Baker?" He pointed. "Down
at the end of the hall to the right, last door." "Thank you." As Dana
turned, she bumped into an unshaven, rumpled-looking man carrying some
papers. The papers fell to the floor.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I was "

"Why don't you look where the hell you're going?" the man snapped. He
stooped to pick up the papers.

"It was an accident. Here. I'll help you. I " Dana reached down, and
as she started to pick up the papers, she knocked several sheets under
a desk.

The man stopped to glare at her. "Do me a favor. Don't help me
anymore."

"As you like," Dana said icily. "I just hope everyone in Washington
isn't as rude as you."

Haughtily, Dana rose and walked toward Mr. Baker's

office. The legend
on the glass window read MATT BAKER." The office was empty. Dana
walked inside and sat down. Looking through the office window, she
watched the frenetic activity going on.

It's nothing like the Claremont Examiner, she thought. There were
thousands of people working here. Down the corridor, the grumpy,
rumpled-looking man was heading toward the office.

No! Dana thought. He's not coming in here. He's on his way somewhere
else

And the man walked in the door. His eyes narrowed. "What the hell are
you doing here?"

Dana swallowed. "You must be Mr. Baker," she said brightly. "I'm
Dana Evans."

"I asked you what you're doing here."

"I'm a reporter with the Claremont Examiner."

"And?"

"You just bought it."

"I did?"

"I I mean the newspaper bought it. The newspaper bought the
newspaper." Dana felt it was not going well. "Anyway, I'm here for a
job. Of course, I already have a job here. It's more like a transfer,
isn't it?"

He was staring at her.

"I can start right away." Dana babbled on. "That's no problem."

Matt Baker moved toward the desk. "Who the hell let you in here?"

"I told you. I'm a reporter for the Claremont Examiner and "

"Go back to Claremont," he snapped. "Try not to knock anyone down on
your way out."

Dana rose and said stiffly, "Thank you very much, Mr. Baker. I
appreciate your courtesy." She stormed out of the office.

Matt Baker looked after her, shaking his head. The world was full of
weirdos.

Dana retraced her steps to the huge editorial room, where dozens of
reporters were typing out stories on their computers. This is where
I'm going to work, Dana thought fiercely. Go back to Claremont. How
dare he!

As Dana looked up, she saw Matt Baker in the distance,

moving in her direction. The damned man was everywhere! Dana quickly
stepped behind a cubicle so he could not see her.

Baker walked past her to a reporter seated at a desk. "Did you get the
interview, Sam?"

"No luck. I went to the Georgetown Medical Center, and they said
there's nobody registered by that name. Tripp Taylor's wife isn't a

patient there."

Matt Baker said, "I know damn well she is. They're covering something
up, dammit. I want to know why she's in the hospital."

"If she is in there, there's no way to get to her, Matt."

"Did you try the flower delivery routine?"

"Sure. It didn't work."

Dana stood there watching Matt Baker and the reporter walk away. What
kind of reporter is it, Dana wondered, who doesn't know how to get an
interview?

Thirty minutes later, Dana was entering the Georgetown Medical Center.
She went into the flower shop. "May I help you?" a clerk asked.
"Yes. I'd like " She hesitated a moment. " fifty dollars' worth of
flowers." She almost choked on the word "fifty." When the clerk handed
her the flowers, Dana said, "Is there a shop in the hospital that might
have a little cap of some kind?" "There's a gift shop around the
corner."

"Thank you."

The gift shop was a cornucopia of junk, with a wide array of greeting
cards, cheaply made toys, balloons and banners, junk-food racks, and
gaudy items of clothing. On a shelf were some souvenir caps. Dana
bought one that resembled a chauffeur's cap and put it on. She
purchased a get-well card and scribbled something on the inside.

Her next stop was at the information desk in the hospital lobby. "I
have flowers here for Mrs. Tripp Taylor."

The receptionist shook her head. "There's no Mrs. Tripp Taylor
registered here."

Dana sighed. "Really? That's too bad. These are from the Vice
President of the United States." She opened the card and showed it to
the receptionist. The inscription read, "Get well quickly." It was
signed, "Arthur Cannon."

Dana said, "Guess I'll have to take these back." She turned to
leave.

The receptionist looked after her uncertainly. "Just a moment!"

Dana stopped. "Yes?"

"I can have those flowers delivered to her."

"Sorry," Dana said. "Vice President Cannon asked that they be
delivered personally." She looked at the receptionist. "Could I have
your name, please? They'll want to tell Mr. Cannon why I couldn't
deliver the flowers."

Panic. "Oh, well. All right. I don't want to cause any problems.
Take them to Room 615. But as soon as you deliver them, you'll have to
leave."

"Right," Dana said.

Five minutes later, she was talking to the wife of the famous rock star
Tripp Taylor.

Stacy Taylor was in her middle twenties. It was difficult to tell
whether she was attractive or not, because at the moment, her face was
badly battered and swollen. She was trying to reach for a glass of
water on a table near the bed when Dana walked in. "Flowers for " Dana
stopped in shock as she saw the woman's face. "Who are they from?"
The words were a mumble. Dana had removed the card. "From from an
admirer." The woman was staring at Dana suspiciously. "Can you reach
that water for me?" "Of course." Dana put the flowers down and handed
the glass of water to the woman in bed. "Can I do anything else for
you?" Dana asked. "Sure," she said through swollen lips. "You can
get me out of this stinking place. My husband won't let me have
visitors. I'm sick of seeing all these doctors and nurses." Dana sat
down on a chair next to the bed. "What happened to you?" The woman
snorted. "Don't you know? I was in an auto accident." "You were?"
"Yes."

"That's awful," Dana said skeptically. She was filled with a deep
anger, for it was obvious that this woman had been beaten.

Forty-five minutes later, Dana emerged with the true story.

When Dana returned to the lobby of the Washington Tribune, a different
guard was there. "Can I help ?"

"It's not my fault," Dana said breathlessly. "Believe me, it's the
darned traffic. Tell Mr. Baker I'm on my way up. He's going to be
furious with me for being late." She hurried toward the elevator and
pressed the button. The guard looked after her uncertainly, then began
dialing. "Hello. Tell Mr. Baker there's a young woman who "

The elevator arrived. Dana stepped in and pressed three. On the third
floor, the activity seemed to have increased, if that was possible.
Reporters were rushing to make their deadlines. Dana stood there,
looking around frantically. Finally, she saw what she wanted. In a
cubicle with a green sign that read GARDENING was an empty desk. Dana
hurried over to it and sat down. She looked at the computer in front
of her, then began typing. She was so engrossed in the story she was
writing that she lost all track of time. When she was finished, she
printed it and pages began spewing out. She was putting them together
when she sensed a shadow over her shoulder.

"What the hell are you doing?" Matt Baker demanded.

"I'm looking for a job, Mr. Baker. I wrote this story, and I thought
" "You thought wrong," Baker exploded. "You don't just walk in here
and take over someone's desk. Now get the hell out before I call
security and have you arrested." "But " "Out!" Dana rose. Summoning
all her dignity, she thrust the pages in Matt Baker's hand and walked

around the corner to the elevator. Matt Baker shook his head in
disbelief. Jesus! What the hell is the world coming to? There was a
wastebasket under the desk. As Matt moved toward it, he glanced at the
first sentence of Dana's story: "Stacy Taylor, her face battered and
bruised, claimed from her hospital bed today that she was there because
her famous rock star husband, Tripp Taylor, beat her. "Every time I
get pregnant, he beats me up. He doesn't want children." " Matt
started to read further and stood there rooted. He looked up, but Dana
was gone. Clutching the pages in his hand, Matt raced toward the
elevators, hoping to find her before she disappeared. As he ran around
the corner, he bumped into her. She was leaning against the wall,
waiting. "How did you get this story?" he demanded. Dana said
simply, "I told you. I'm a reporter." He took a deep breath. "Come
on back to my office."

They were seated in Matt Baker's office again. "That's a good job," he
said grudgingly. "Thank you! I can't tell you how much I appreciate
this," Dana said excitedly. "I'm going to be the best reporter you
ever had. You'll see. What I really want is to be a foreign
correspondent, but I'm willing to work my way up to that, even if it
takes a year." She saw the expression on his face. "Or maybe two."
"The Tribune has no job openings, and there's a waiting list." She
looked at him in astonishment. "But I assumed " "Hold it." Dana

watched as he picked up a. pen and wrote out the letters of the word
"assume," ASS u ME. He pointed to the word. "When a reporter assumes
something, Miss Evans, it makes an oss out of you and me. Do you
understand?" "Yes, sir." "Good." He was thoughtful for a moment,
then came to a decision. "Do you ever watch WTE? The Tribune
Enterprises television station." "No, sir. I can't say that I "
"Well, you will now. You're in luck. There's a job opening there.
One of the writers just quit. You can take his place." "Doing what?"
Dana asked tentatively. "Writing television copy." Her face fell.
"Television copy? I don't know anything about " "It's simple. The
producer of the news will give you the raw material from all the news
services. You'll put it into English and put it on the TelePrompTer
for the anchors to read."

Dana sat there, silent.

"What?"

"Nothing, it's just that I'm a reporter."

"We have five hundred reporters here, and they've all spent years
earning their stripes. Go over to Building Four. Ask for Mr. Hawkins.
If you have to start somewhere, television isn't bad." Matt Baker
reached for the phone. "I'll give Hawkins a call."

Dana sighed. "Right. Thank you, Mr. Baker. If you ever need "

"Out."

The WTE television studios took up the entire sixth floor of Building
Four. Tom Hawkins, the producer of the nightly news, led Dana into his
office. "Have you ever worked in television?" "No, sir. I've worked
on newspapers." "Dinosaurs. They're the past. We're the present.
And who knows what the future will be? Let me show you around." There
were dozens of people working at desks and monitors. Wire copy from
half a dozen news services was appearing on computers. "Here's where
stories and news breaks come in from all over the world," Hawkins
explained. "I decide which ones we're going with. The assignment desk
sends out crews to cover those stories. Our reporters in the field
send in their stories by microwave or transmitters. Besides our wire
services, we have one hundred and sixty police channels, reporters with
cell phones, scanners, monitors. Every story is planned to the second.
The writers work with tape editors to get the timing exact. The
average news story runs between a minute and a half and a minute and
forty-five seconds."

"How many writers work here?" Dana asked.

"Six. Then you have a video coordinator, news tape editors, producers,
directors, reporters, anchors ..." He stopped. A man and woman were
approaching them. "Speaking of anchors, meet Julia Brinkman and
Michael Tate."

Julia Brinkman was a stunning woman, with chestnut-colored

hair, tinted
contacts that made her eyes a sultry green, and a practiced, disarming
smile. Michael Tate was an athletic-looking man with a burs tingly
genial smile and an outgoing manner.

"Our new writer," Hawkins said. "Donna Evanston."

"Dana Evans."

"Whatever. Let's get to work."

He took Dana back to his office. He nodded toward the assignment board
on the wall. "Those are the stories I'll choose from. They're called
slugs. We're on twice a day. We do the noon news from twelve to one
and the nightly news from ten to eleven. When I tell you which stories
I want to run with, you'll put them together and make everything sound
so exciting that the viewers can't switch channels. The tape editor
will feed you video clips, and you'll work them into the scripts and
indicate where the clips go."

"Right."

"Sometimes there's a breaking story, and then we'll cut into our
regular programming with a live feed."

"That's interesting," Dana said.

She had no idea that one day it was going to save her life.

The first night's program was a disaster. Dana had put the news leads
in the middle instead of the beginning, and Julia Brinkman found

herself reading Michael Tate's stories while Michael was reading hers.
When the broadcast was over, the director said to Dana, "Mr. Hawkins
would like to see you in his office. Now." Hawkins was sitting behind
his desk, grim-faced. "I know," Dana said contritely. "It was a new
low in television, and it's all my fault." Hawkins sat there watching
her. Dana tried again. "The good news, Tom, is that from now on it
can only get better. Right?" He kept staring at her. "And it will
never happen again because" she saw the look on his face "I'm fired."
"No," Hawkins said curtly. "That would be letting you off too easily.
You're going to do this until you get it right. And I'm talking about
the noon news tomorrow. Am I making myself clear?"

"Very."

"Good. I want you here at eight o'clock in the morning." "Right,
Tom."

"And since we're going to be working together you can call me Mr.
Hawkins."

The noon news the next day went smoothly. Tom Hawkins had been right,
Dana decided. It was just a matter of getting used to the rhythm. Get
your assignment... write the story ... work with the tape editor ...
set up the TelePrompTer for the anchors to read.

From that point on, it became routine.

Dana's break came eight months after she had started working at WTE.

She had just finished putting the evening news report on the
TelePrompTer at nine forty-five and was preparing to leave. When she
walked into the television studio to say good night, there was chaos.
Everyone was talking at once.

Rob Cline, the director, was shouting, "Where the hell is she?"

"I don't know."

"Hasn't anyone seen her?"

"No."

"Did you phone her apartment?"

"I got the answering machine."

"Wonderful. We're on the air" he looked at his watch "in twelve
minutes." "Maybe Julia was in an accident," Michael Tate said. "She
could be dead." "That's no excuse. She should have phoned." Dana
said, "Excuse me ..." The director turned to her impatiently. "Yes?"
"If Julia doesn't show up, I could do the newscast." "Forget it." He
turned back to his assistant. "Call security and see if she's come
into the building." The assistant picked up the phone and dialed.
"Has Julia Brinkman checked in yet... ? Well, when she does, tell her
to get up here, fast." "Have him hold an elevator for her. We're on
the air in" he looked at his watch again "seven damned minutes." Dana
stood there, watching the growing panic. Michael Tate said, "I could
do both parts." "No," the director snapped. "We need two

of you up
there." He looked at his watch again. "Three minutes.
Goddammit.
How could she do this to us? We're on the air in " Dana
spoke up. "I
know all the words. I wrote them." He gave her a quick
glance. "You
have no makeup on. You're dressed wrong." A voice came
from the sound
engineer's booth. "Two minutes. Take your places,
please." Michael
Tate shrugged and took his seat on the platform in front
of the
cameras.

"Places, please!"

Dana smiled at the director. "Good night, Mr. Cline."
She started
toward the door.

"Wait a minute!" He was rubbing his hand across his
forehead. "Are
you sure you can do this?"

"Try me," Dana said.

"I don't have any choice, do I?" he moaned. "All right.
Get up
there. My God! Why didn't I listen to my mother and
become a
doctor?"

Dana hurried up to the platform and took the seat next to
Michael
Tate.

"Thirty seconds ... twenty... ten ... five ..."

The director signaled with his hand, and the red light on
the camera
flashed on.

"Good evening," Dana said smoothly. "Welcome to the WTE

ten-o'clock
news. We have a breaking story for you in Holland. There was an
explosion at an Amsterdam school this afternoon and..."

The rest of the broadcast went smoothly.

The following morning, Rob Cline came into Dana's office. "Bad news.
Julia was in an automobile accident last night. Her face is" he
hesitated "disfigured." "I'm sorry," Dana said, concerned. "How bad
is it?" "Pretty bad." "But today plastic surgery can "

He shook his head. "Not this time. She won't be coming back."

"I'd like to go see her. Where is she?"

"They're taking her back to her family, in Oregon."

"I'm so sorry."

"You win some, you lose some." He studied Dana a moment. "You were
okay last night. We'll keep you on until we find someone permanent."

Dana went to see Matt Baker. "Did you see the news last night?" she
asked.

"Yes," he grunted. "For God's sakes, try putting on some makeup and a
more appropriate dress."

Dana felt deflated. "Right."

As she turned to leave, Matt Baker said grudgingly, "You weren't bad."
Coming from him, it was a high compliment.

On the fifth night of the news broadcast, the director

said to Dana,
"By the way, the big brass said to keep you on."

She wondered if the big brass was Matt Baker.

Within six months, Dana became a fixture on the Washington scene. She
was young and attractive and her intelligence shone through. At the
end of the year, she was given a raise and special assignments. One of
her shows, Here and Now, interviews with celebrities, had zoomed to the
top of the ratings.

Her interviews were personal and sympathetic, and celebrities who
hesitated to appear on other talk shows asked to be on Dana's show.
Magazines and newspapers began interviewing Dana. She was becoming a
celebrity herself.

At night, Dana would watch the international news. She envied the
foreign correspondents. They were doing something important. They
were reporting history, informing the world about the important events
that were happening around the globe. She felt frustrated.

Dana's two-year contract with WTE was nearly up. Philip Cole, the
chief of correspondents, called her in.

"You're doing a great job, Dana. We're all proud of you."

"Thank you, Philip."

"It's time for us to be talking about your new contract. First of all
"

"I'm quitting."

"I beg your pardon?"

"When my contract's up, I'm not doing the show anymore."

He was looking at her incredulously. "Why would you want to quit?
Don't you like it here?"

"I like it a lot," Dana said. "I want to be with WTE, but I want to be
a foreign correspondent."

"That's a miserable life," he exploded. "Why in God's name would you
want to do that?" "Because I'm tired of hearing what celebrities want
to cook for dinner and how they met their fifth husband. There are
wars going on, and people are suffering and dying. The world doesn't
give a damn. I want to make them care." She took a deep breath. "I'm
sorry. I can't stay on here." She rose and started toward the door.
"Wait a minute! Are you sure this is what you want to do?" "It's what
I've always wanted to do," Dana said quietly. He was thoughtful for a
moment. "Where do you want to go?" It took her a moment for the
import of his words to sink in. When Dana found her voice, she said,
"Sarajevo."

Nine.

Being governor was even more exciting than Oliver Russell had
anticipated. Power was a seductive mistress, and Oliver loved it. His
decisions influenced the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. He

became adept at swaying the state legislature, and his influence and
reputation kept expanding. I really am making a difference, Oliver
thought happily. He remembered Senator Davis's words: "This is just a
stepping-stone, Oliver. Walk carefully." And he was careful. He had
numerous affairs, but they were always handled with the greatest
discretion. He knew that they had to be.

From time to time, Oliver checked with the hospital about Miriam's
condition.

"She's still in a coma, Governor."

"Keep me informed."

One of Oliver's duties as governor was hosting state dinners. The
guests of honor were supporters, sports figures, entertainers, people
with political clout, and visiting dignitaries. Jan was a gracious
hostess, and Oliver enjoyed the way people reacted to her.

One day Jan came to Oliver and said, "I just talked to Father. He's
giving a party next weekend at his home. He would like us to come.
There are some people he wants you to meet."

That Saturday, at Senator Davis's sumptuous home in Georgetown, Oliver
found himself shaking hands with some of the most important wheelers
and dealers in Washington. It was a beautiful party, and Oliver was
enjoying himself immensely. "Having a good time, Oliver?" "Yes. It's
a wonderful party. You couldn't wish for a better one." Peter Tager

said, "Speaking of wishes, that reminds me. The other day, Elizabeth,
my six-year-old, was in a cranky mood and wouldn't get dressed. Betsy
was getting desperate. Elizabeth looked at her and said, "Mama, what
are you thinking?" Betsy said, "Honey, I was just wishing that you
were in a good mood, and that you would get dressed and have your
breakfast like a good girl." And Elizabeth said, "Mama, your wish is
not being granted!" Isn't that great? Those kids are fantastic. See
you later, Governor."

A couple walked in the door and Senator Davis went to greet them.

The Italian ambassador, Atilio Picone, was an imposing-looking man in
his sixties, with dark, Sicilian features. His wife, Sylva, was one of
the most beautiful women Oliver had ever seen. She had been an actress
before she married Atilio and was still popular in Italy. Oliver could
see why. She had large, sensuous brown eyes, the face of a Madonna,
and the voluptuous body of a Rubens nude. She was twenty-five years
younger than her husband.

Senator Davis brought the couple over to Oliver and introduced them.

"I'm delighted to meet you," Oliver said. He could not take his eyes
off her.

She smiled. "I've been hearing a great deal about you."

"Nothing bad, I hope."

"I Her husband cut in. "Senator Davis speaks very highly of you."

Oliver looked at Sylva and said, "I'm nattered."

Senator Davis led the couple away. When he returned to Oliver, he
said, "That's off limits, Governor. Forbidden fruit. Take a bite of
that, and you can kiss your future goodbye."

"Relax, Todd. I wasn't "

"I'm serious. You can alienate two countries at once."

At the end of the evening, when Sylva and her husband were leaving,
Atilio said, "It was nice to meet you."

"It was a pleasure."

Sylva took Oliver's hand in hers and said softly, "We look forward to
seeing you again."

Their eyes met. "Yes."

And Oliver thought, I must be careful.

Two weeks later, back in Frankfort, Oliver was working in his office
when his secretary buzzed him.

"Governor, Senator Davis is here to see you."

"Senator Davis is here?"

"Yes, sir."

"Send him in." Oliver knew that his father-in-law was fighting for an
important bill in Washington, and Oliver wondered what he was doing in
Frankfort. The door opened, and the senator walked in.

Peter Tager
was with him.

Senator Todd Davis smiled and put his arm around Oliver. "Governor,
it's good to see you."

"It's great to see you, Todd." He turned to Peter Tager. "Morning,
Peter."

"Morning, Oliver."

"Hope I'm not disturbing you," Senator Davis said. "No, not at all.
Is is anything wrong?" Senator Davis looked at Tager and smiled. "Oh,
I don't think you could say anything's wrong, Oliver. In fact, I would
say that everything's just fine." Oliver was studying the two of them,
puzzled. "I don't understand." "I have some good news for you, son.
May we sit down?" "Oh, forgive me. What would you like? Coffee?
Whiskey ?" "No. We're pretty well stimulated already." Again, Oliver
wondered what was going on. "I've just flown in from Washington.
There's a pretty influential group there who think you're going to be
our next president." Oliver felt a small thrill go through him. "I
really?" "As a matter of fact, the reason I flew down here is that
it's time for us to start your campaign. The election is less than two
years away." "It's perfect timing," Peter Tager said enthusiastically.
"Before we're through, everyone in the world is going to know who you
are." Senator Davis added, "Peter is going to take charge of your
campaign. He'll handle everything for you. You know you

won't find
anyone better." Oliver looked at Tager and said warmly,
"I agree."
"It's my pleasure. We're going to have a lot of fun,
Oliver."

Oliver turned to Senator Davis. "Isn't this going to cost
a lot?"

"Don't worry about that. You'll go first-class all the
way. I've
convinced a lot of my good friends that you're the man to
put their
money on." He leaned forward in his chair. "Don't
underestimate
yourself, Oliver. The survey that came out a couple of
months ago
listed you as the third most effective governor in the
country. Well,
you have something that the other two don't have. I told
you this
before charisma. That is something that money can't buy.
People like
you, and they're going to vote for you."

Oliver was getting more and more excited. "When do we get
started?"

"We've already started," Senator Davis told him. "We're
going to build
a strong campaign team, and we're going to start lining up
delegates
around the country."

"How realistic are my chances?"

"In the primaries, you're going to blow everyone away,"
Tager replied.
"As for the general election, President Norton is riding
pretty high.
If you had to run against him, he'd be pretty tough to
beat. The good
news, of course, is that since this is his second term, he
can't run

again and Vice President Cannon is a pale shadow. A little sunshine
will make him disappear."

The meeting lasted for four hours. When it was over, Senator Davis
said to Tager, "Peter, would you excuse us for a minute?"

"Certainly, Senator."

They watched him go out the door.

Senator Davis said, "I had a talk with Jan this morning."

Oliver felt a small fris son of alarm. "Yes?"

Senator Davis looked at Oliver and smiled. "She's very happy."

Oliver breathed a sigh of relief. "I'm glad."

"So am I, son. So am I. Just keep the home fires burning.

You know what I mean?"

"Don't worry about that, Todd. I "

Senator Davis's smile faded. "I do worry about it, Oliver.

I can't fault you for being horny just don't let it turn you into a
toad."

As Senator Davis and Peter Tager were walking through the corridor of
the state capitol, the senator said, "I want you to start putting a
staff together. Don't spare any expense. To begin with, I want
campaign offices in New York, Washington, Chicago, and San Francisco.
Primaries begin in twelve months. The convention is eighteen months

away. After that, we should have smooth sailing." They had reached
the car. "Ride with me to the airport, Peter."

"He'll make a wonderful president."

Senator Davis nodded. And I'll have him in my pocket, he thought. He's
going to be my puppet. I'll pull the strings, and the President of the
United States will speak.

The senator pulled a gold cigar case from his pocket. "Ci gar?

The primaries around the country started well. Senator Davis had been
right about Peter Tager. He was one of the best political managers in
the world, and the organization he created was superb. Because Tager
was a strong family man and a deeply religious churchgoer, he attracted
the religious right. Because he knew what made politics work, he was
also able to persuade the liberals to put aside their differences and
work together. Peter Tager was a brilliant campaign manager, and his
raffish black eye patch became a familiar sight on all the networks.

Tager knew that if Oliver was to be successful, he would have to go
into the convention with a minimum of two hundred delegate votes. He
intended to see to it that Oliver got them.

The schedule Tager drew up included multiple trips to every state in
the union.

Oliver looked at the program and said, "This this is impossible,

Peter!"

"Not the way we've set it up," Tager assured him. "It's all been
coordinated. The senator's lending you his Challenger. There will be
people to guide you every step of the way, and I'll be at your side."

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Senator Davis introduced Sirne Lombardo to Oliver. Lombardo was a
giant of a man, tall and burly, dark both physically and emotionally, a
brooding man who spoke little.

"How does he fit into the picture?" Oliver asked the senator when they
were alone.

Senator Davis said, "Sime is our problem-solver. Sometimes people need
a little persuasion to go along. Sime is very convincing."

Oliver did not pursue it any further.

When the presidential campaign began in earnest, Peter Tager gave
Oliver detailed briefings on what to say, when to say it, and how to
say it. He saw to it that Oliver made appearances in all the key
electoral states. And wherever Oliver went, he said what people wanted
to hear.

In Pennsylvania: "Manufacturing is the lifeblood of this country. We're
not going to forget that. We're going to open up the factories again
and get America back on the track!"

Cheers.

In California: "The aircraft industry is one of America's most vital
assets. There's no reason for a single one of your plants to be shut
down. We're going to open them up again."

13Q

Cheers.

In Detroit: "We invented cars, and the Japanese took the technology
away from us. Well, we're going to get back our rightful place as
number one. Detroit's going to be the automobile center of the world
again!"

Cheers.

At college campuses, it was federally guaranteed student loans.

In speeches at army bases around the country, it was preparedness.

In the beginning, when Oliver was relatively unknown, the odds were
stacked against him. As the campaign went on, the polls showed him
moving up.

The first week in July, more than four thousand delegates and
alternates, along with hundreds of party officials and candidates,
gathered at the convention in Cleveland and turned the city upside down
with parades and floats and parties. Television cameras from all over
the world recorded the spectacle. Peter Tager and Sime Lombardo saw to

it that Governor Oliver Russell was always in front of the lenses.

There were half a dozen possible nominees in Oliver's party, but
Senator Todd Davis had worked behind the scenes to assure that, one by
one, they were eliminated. He ruthlessly called in favors owed, some
as old as twenty years.

"Toby, it's Todd. How are Emma and Suzy?... Good. I want to talk to
you about your boy, Andrew. I'm worried about him, Toby. You know, in
my opinion, he's too liberal. The South will never accept him. Here's
what I suggest...."

"Alfred, it's Todd. How's Roy doing?... No need to thank me. I was
happy to help him out. I want to talk to you about your candidate,
Jerry. In my opinion, he's too right-wing. If we go with him, we'll
lose the North. Now, here's what I would suggest...."

"Kenneth Todd. I just wanted to tell you that I'm glad that real
estate deal worked out for you. We all did pretty well, didn't we? By
the way, I think we ought to have a little talk about Slater. He's
weak. He's a loser. We can't afford to back a loser, can we?..."

And so it went, until practically the only viable candidate left to the
party was Governor Oliver Russell.

The nomination process went smoothly. On the first ballot, Oliver
Russell had seven hundred votes: more than two hundred from six

northeastern industrial states, one hundred and fifty from six New
England states, forty from four southern states, another one hundred
and eighty from two farm states, and the balance from three Pacific
states. Peter Tager was working frantically to make sure the publicity
train kept rolling. When the final tally was counted, Oliver Russell
was the winner. And with the excitement of the circus atmosphere that
had carefully been created, Oliver Russell was nominated by
acclamation. The next step was to choose a vice president. Melvin

Wicks was a perfect choice. He was a politically correct Californian a
wealthy entrepreneur, and a personable congressman.

"They'll complement each other," Tager said. "Now the real work
begins. We're going after the magic number two hundred and seventy."
The number of electoral votes needed to win the presidency.

Tager told Oliver, "The people want a young leader.... Good-looking, a
little humor and a vision.... They want you to tell them how great they
are and they want to believe it.... Let them know you're smart, but
don't be too smart.... If you attack your opponent, keep it
impersonal.... Never look down on a reporter. Treat them as friends,
and they'll be your friends.... Try to avoid any show of pettiness.
Remember you're a statesman."

The campaign was nonstop. Senator Davis's jet carried Oliver to Texas

for three days, California for a day, Michigan for half a day,
Massachusetts for six hours. Every minute was accounted for. Some
days Oliver would visit as many as ten towns and deliver ten speeches.
There was a different hotel every night, the Drake in Chicago, the St.
Regis in Detroit, the Carlyle in New York City, the Place dAmes in New
Orleans, until, finally, they all seemed to blend into one. Wherever
Oliver went, there were police cars leading the procession, large
crowds, and cheering voters.

Jan accompanied Oliver on most of the trips, and he had to admit that
she was a great asset. She was attractive and intelligent, and the
reporters liked her. From time to time, Oliver read about Leslie's
latest acquisitions: a newspaper in Madrid, a television station in
Mexico, a radio station in Kansas. He was happy for her success. It
made him feel less guilty about what he had done to her.

Everywhere Oliver went, the reporters photographed him, interviewed
him, and quoted him. There were more than a hundred correspondents
covering his campaign, some of them from countries at the far ends of
the earth. As the campaign neared its climax, the polls showed that
Oliver Russell was the front-runner. But unexpectedly, his opponent,
Vice President Cannon, began overtaking him. Peter Tager became
worried. "Cannon's moving up in the polls. We've got to stop him."
Two television debates between Vice President Cannon and Oliver had

been agreed upon. "Cannon is going to discuss the economy," Tager told Oliver, "and he'll do a good job. We have to fake him out. Here's my plan...."

The night of the first debate, in front of the television cameras, Vice President Cannon talked about the economy. "America has never been more economically sound. Business is flourishing." He spent the next ten minutes elaborating on his theme, proving his points with facts and figures. When it was Oliver Russell's turn at the microphone, he said, "That was very impressive. I'm sure we're all pleased that big business is doing so well and that corporate profits have never been higher." He turned to his opponent. "But you forgot to mention that one of the reasons corporations are doing so well is because of what is euphemistically termed 'downsizing." To put it bluntly, downsizing simply means that people are being fired to make way for machines. More people are out of work than ever before. It's the human side of the picture we should be examining. I don't happen to share your view that corporate financial success is more important than people...." And so it went. Where Vice President Cannon had talked about business, Oliver Russell took a humanitarian approach and talked about emotions and opportunities. By the time he was through, Russell had managed to make Cannon sound like a coldblooded politician who cared nothing about the American people. The morning after the debate, the polls shifted,

putting Oliver Russell within three points of the vice president. There
was to be one more national debate.

Arthur Cannon had learned his lesson. At the final debate, he stood
before the microphone and said, "Ours is a land where all people must
have equal opportunities. America has been blessed with freedom, but
that alone is not enough. Our people must have the freedom to work,
and earn a decent living...."

He stole Oliver Russell's thunder by concentrating on all the wonderful
plans he had in mind for the welfare of the people. But Peter Tager
had anticipated that. When Cannon was finished, Oliver Russell stepped
to the microphone.

"That was very touching. I'm sure we were all very moved by what you
had to say about the plight of the unemployed, and, as you called him,
the 'forgotten man." What disturbs me is that you forgot to say how
you are going to do all those wonderful things for those people." And
from then on, where Vice President Cannon had dealt in emotions, Oliver
Russell talked about issues and his economic plans, leaving the vice
president hanging high and dry.

Oliver, Jan, and Senator Davis were having dinner at the senator's
mansion in Georgetown. The senator smiled at Jan. "I've just seen the
latest polls. I think you can begin redecorating the White House."
Her face lit up. "Do you really think we're going to win, Father?"

"I'm wrong about a lot of things, honey, but never about politics.
That's my life's blood. In November, we're going to have a new
president, and he's sitting right next to you."

Ten.

Fasten your seat belts, please." Here we go! Dana thought excitedly.
She looked over at Benn Albertson and Wally Newman. Benn Al-bert son
Dana's producer, was a hyperkinetic bearded man in his forties. He had
produced some of the top-rated news shows in television and was highly
respected. Wally Newman, the cameraman, was in his early fifties. He
was talented and enthusiastic, and eagerly looking forward to his new
assignment. Dana thought about the adventure that lay ahead. They
would land in Paris and then fly to Zagreb, Croatia, and finally to
Sarajevo.

During her last week in Washington, Dana had been briefed by Shelley
McGuire, the foreign editor. "You'll need a truck in Sarajevo to
transmit your stories to the satellite," McGuire told her. "We don't
own one there so we'll rent a truck and buy time from the Yugoslav
company that owns the satellite. If things go well, we'll get our own
truck later. You'll be operating on two different levels. Some
stories you'll cover live, but most of them will be taped. Benn
Albertson will tell you what he wants, and you'll shoot the footage and
then do a sound track in a local studio. I've given you the best

producer and cameraman in the business. You shouldn't
have any
problem." Dana was to remember those optimistic words
later.

"The day before Dana left, Matt Baker had telephoned.
"Get over to my
office." His voice was gruff.

"I'll be right there." Dana had hung up with a feeling of
Apprehension. He's changed his mind about approving my
transfer ctnd
he's not going to let me go. How could he do this to me?
Well, she
thought determinedly, I'm going to fight him.

Ten minutes later, Dana was marching into Matt Baker's
office. "I know
what you're going to say," she began, "but it "Won't do
you any good.
I'm going! I've dreamed about this since I was a little
girl. I think
I can do some good over there. you've got to give me a
chance to try."
She took a deep breath. "All right," Dana said defiantly.
"What did
you want to say?"

Matt Baker looked at her and said mildly, "Bon voyage."

Dana blinked. "What?"

"Bon voyage. It means 'good journey." "

"I know what it means. I didn't you send for me to ?"

"I sent for you because I've spoken to a few of our
foreign
correspondents. They gave me some advice to pass on to
you."

This gruff bear of a man had taken the time and trouble to
talk to some
foreign correspondents so that he could help her! "I I

don't know how
to "

"Then don't," he grunted. "You're going into a shooting war. There's
no guarantee you can protect yourself a hundred percent, because
bullets don't give a damn who they kill. But when you're in the middle
of action, the adrenaline starts to flow. It can make you reckless,
and you do stupid things you wouldn't ordinarily do. You have to
control that. Always play it safe. Don't wander around the streets
alone. No news story is worth your life. Another thing ..."

The lecture had gone on for almost an hour. Finally, he said, "Well,
that's it. Take care of yourself. If you let anything happen to you,
I'm going to be damned mad."

Dana had leaned over and kissed him on the cheek.

"Don't ever do that again," he snapped. He stood up. "It's going to
be rough over there, Dana. If you should change your mind when you get
there and want to come home, just let me know, and I'll arrange it."

"I won't change my mind," Dana said confidently.

As it turned out, she was wrong.

The flight to Paris was uneventful. They landed at Charles de Gaulle
Airport and the trio took an airport minibus to Croatia Airlines. There
was a three-hour delay.

At ten o'clock that night, the Croatia Airlines plane

landed at Butmir
Airport in Sarajevo. The passengers were herded into a security
building, where their passports were checked by uniformed guards and
they were waved on. As Dana moved toward the exit, a short,
unpleasant-looking man in civilian clothes stepped in front of her,
blocking her way. "Passport."

"I showed them my "

"I am Colonel Gordan Divjak. Your passport."

Dana handed her passport to him, along with her press credentials.

He flipped through it. "A journalist?" He looked at her sharply.
"Whose side are you on?"

"I'm not on anyone's side," Dana said evenly.

"Just be careful what you report," Colonel Divjak warned. "We do not
treat espionage lightly."

Welcome to Sarajevo.

A bulletproof Land Rover was at the airport to meet them. The driver
was a swarthy-looking man in his early twenties. "I am Jovan Tolj, for
your pleasure. I will be your driver in Sarajevo." Jovan drove fast,
swerving around corners and racing through deserted streets as though
they were being pursued. "Excuse me," Dana said nervously. "Is there
any special hurry?" "Yes, if you want to get there alive." "But " In
the distance, Dana heard the sound of rumbling thunder, and it seemed

to be coming closer. What she was hearing was not
thunder. In the
darkness, Dana could make out buildings with shattered
fronts,
apartments without roofs, stores without windows. Ahead,
she could see
the Holiday Inn, where they were staying. The front of
the hotel was
badly pockmarked, and a deep hole had been gouged in the
driveway. The
car sped past it. "Wait! This is our hotel," Dana cried.
"Where are
you going?" "The front entrance is too dangerous." Jovan
said. He
turned the corner and raced into an alley. "Everyone uses
the back
entrance." Dana's mouth was suddenly dry. "Oh." The
lobby of the
Holiday Inn was filled with people milling about and
chatting. An
attractive young Frenchman approached Dana. "Ah, we have
been
expecting you. You are Dana Evans?" "Yes." "Jean Paul
Hubert, M6,
Metropole Television." "I'm happy to meet you. This is
Benn Albertson
and Wally Newman." The men shook hands. "Welcome to
what's left of
our rapidly disappearing city."

Others were approaching the group to welcome them. One by
one, they
stepped up and introduced themselves. "Steffan Mueller,
Kabel
Network." "Roderick Munn, BBC 2." "Marco Benelli, Italia
I." "Akihiro
Ishihara, TV Tokyo." "Juan Santos, Channel 6,
Guadalajara." "Chun
Qian, Shanghai Television." It seemed to Dana that every
country in
the world had a journalist there. The introductions
seemed to go on
forever. The last one was a burly Russian with a gleaming
gold front

tooth. "Nikolai Petrovich, Gorizont 22." "How many reporters are
here?" Dana asked Jean Paul. "Over two hundred and fifty. We don't
see many wars as colorful as this one. Is this your first?" He made
it sound as though it were some kind of tennis match. "Yes." Jean
Paul said, "If I can be of any help, please let me know." "Thank you."
She hesitated. "Who is Colonel Gordan Div-jak?" "You don't want to
know. We all think he is with the Serbian equivalent of the Gestapo,
but we're not sure. I would suggest you stay out of his way." "I'll
remember."

Later, as Dana got into her bed, there was a sudden loud explosion from
across the street, and then another, and the room began to shake. It
was terrifying, and at the same time exhilarating. It seemed unreal,
something out of a movie. Dana lay awake all night, listening to the
sounds of the terrible killing machines and watching the flashes of
light reflected in the grimy hotel windows.

In the morning, Dana got dressed jeans, boots, flak jacket. She felt
self-conscious, and yet: "Always play it safe.... No news story is
worth your life."

Dana, Benn, and Wally were in the lobby restaurant, talking about their
families.

"I forgot to tell you the good news," Wally said. "I'm going to have a
grandson next month."

"That's great!" And Dana thought: Will I ever have a child and a grandchild? Que sera sera.

"I have an idea," Benn said. "Let's do a general story first on what's happening here and how the people's lives have been affected. I'll go with Wally and scout locations. Why don't you get us some satellite time, Dana?"

"Fine."

Jovan Tolj was in the alley, in the Land Rover. "Dobrojutro. Good morning."

"Good morning, Jovan. I want to go to the place where they rent satellite time."

As they drove, Dana was able to get a clear look at Sarajevo for the first time. It seemed to her that there was not a building that had been untouched. The sound of gunfire was continuous.

"Don't they ever stop?" Dana asked.

"They will stop when they run out of ammunition," Jovan said bitterly. "And they will never run out of ammunition."

The streets were deserted, except for a few pedestrians, and all the cafes were closed. Pavements were pockmarked with shell craters. They passed the Oslobodjenje building.

"That is our newspaper," Jovan said proudly. "The Serbs keep trying to destroy it, but they cannot."

A few minutes later, they reached the satellite offices. "I will wait
for you," Jovan said.

Behind a desk in the lobby, there was a receptionist who appeared to be
in his eighties. "Do you speak English?" Dana asked. He looked at
her wearily. "I speak nine languages, madam. What do you wish?" "I'm
with WTE. I want to book some satellite time and arrange " "Third
floor."

The sign on the door read: YUGOSLAVIA SATELLITE DIVISION. The
reception room was filled with men seated on wooden benches lined
against the walls.

Dana introduced herself to the young woman at the reception desk. "I'm
Dana Evans, with WTE. I want to book some satellite time."

"Take a seat, please, and wait your turn."

Dana looked around the room. "Are all these people here to book
satellite time?"

The woman looked up at her and said, "Of course."

Almost two hours later, Dana was ushered into the office of the
manager, a short, squat man with a cigar in his mouth; he looked like
the old cliche prototype of a Hollywood producer. He had a heavy
accent. "How can I help you?" "I'm Dana Evans, with WTE. I'd like to
rent one of your trucks and book the satellite for half an hour. Six
o'clock in Washington would be a good time. And I'll want

that same
time every day indefinitely." She looked at his expression. "Any
problem?" "One. There are no satellite trucks available. They have
all been booked. I will give you a call if someone cancels." Dana
looked at him in dismay. "No ? But I need some satellite time," she
said. "I'm " "So does everybody else, madam. Except for those who
have their own trucks, of course."

When Dana returned to the reception room, it was full. I have to do
something about this, she thought.

When Dana left the satellite office, she said to Jovan, "I'd like you
to drive me around the city."

He turned to look at her, then shrugged. "As you wish." He started
the car and began to race through the streets.

"A little slower, please. I need to get a feel of this place."

Sarajevo was a city under siege. There was no running water or
electricity, and more houses were being bombed every hour. The air
raid alarm went on so frequently that people ignored it. A miasma of
fatalism seemed to hang over the city. If the bullet had your name on
it, there was nowhere to hide.

On almost every street corner, men, women, and children were peddling
the few possessions they had left.

"They are refugees from Bosnia and Croatia," Jovan explained, "trying

to get enough money to buy food."

Fires were raging everywhere. There were no firemen in sight.

"Isn't there a fire department?" Dana asked.

He shrugged. "Yes, but they don't dare come. They make too good a
target for Serb snipers."

In the beginning, the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina had made little
sense to Dana. It was not until she had been in Sarajevo for a week
that she realized that it made no sense at all. No one could explain
it. Someone had mentioned a professor from the university, who was a
well-known historian. He had been wounded and was confined to his
home. Dana decided to have a talk with him. Jovan drove her to one of
the old neighborhoods in the city, where the professor lived. Professor
Mladic Staka was a small, gray-haired man, almost ethereal in
appearance. A bullet had shattered his spine and paralyzed him.
"Thank you for coming," he said. "I do not get many visitors these
days. You said you needed to talk to me." "Yes. I'm supposed to be
covering this war," Dana told him. "But to tell the truth, I'm having
trouble understanding it." "The reason is very simple, my dear. This
war in Bosnia and Herzegovina is beyond understanding. For decades,
the Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, and Muslims lived together in peace, under
Tito. They were friends and neighbors. They grew up together, worked
together, went to the same schools, intermarried." "And

now?" "These
same friends are torturing and murdering one another.
Their hatred has
made them do things so disgusting that I cannot even speak
about them."
"I've heard some of the stories," Dana said. The stories
she had heard
were almost beyond belief: a well filled with bloody human
testicles,
babies raped and slaughtered, innocent villagers locked in
churches
that were then set on fire. "Who started this?" Dana
asked. He shook
his head. "It depends on whom you ask. During the Second
World War,
hundreds of thousand of Serbs, who were on the side of the
Allies, were
wiped out by the Croats, who were on the side of the
Nazis. Now the
Serbs are taking their bloody revenge. They are holding
the country
hostage, and they are merciless. More than two hundred
thousand shells
have fallen on Sarajevo alone. At least ten thousand
people have been
killed and more than sixty thousand injured. The Bosnians
and Muslims
must bear the responsibility for their share of the
torture and
killing. Those who do not want war are being forced into
it. No one
can trust anyone. The only thing they have left is hate.
What we have
is a conflagration that keeps feeding on itself, and what
fuels the
fires is the bodies of the innocent."

When Dana returned to her hotel that afternoon, Benn
Albert-son was
waiting there to tell her that he had received a message
that a truck
and satellite time would be available to them the
following day at 6:00
P.M. "I found the ideal place for us to shoot," Wally

Newman told her.
"There's a square with a Catholic church, a mosque, a Protestant
church, and a synagogue, all within a block of one another. They've
all been bombed out. You can write a story about equal-opportunity
hatred, and what it has done to the people who live here, who don't
want anything to do with the war but are forced to be a part of it."
Dana nodded, excited. "Great. I'll see you at dinner. I'm going to
work." She headed for her room.

At six o'clock the following evening, Dana and Wally and Benn were
gathered in front of the square where the bombed-out churches and
synagogue were located. Wally's television camera had been set up on a
tripod, and Benn was waiting for confirmation from Washington that the
satellite signal was good. Dana could hear sniper fire in the near
background. She was suddenly glad she was wearing her flak jacket.
There's nothing to be afraid of. They're not shooting at us. They're
shooting at one another. They need us to tell the world their story.
Dana saw Wally signal. She took a deep breath, looked into the camera
lens, and began. "The bombed-out churches you see behind me are a
symbol of what is happening in this country. There are no walls for
people to hide behind anymore, no place that is safe. In earlier
times, people could find sanctuary in their churches. But here, the
past and the present and the future have all blended together and " At
that second, she heard a shrill approaching whistle,

looked up, and saw
Wally's head explode into a red melon. It's a trick of the light, was
Dana's first thought. And then she watched, aghast, as Wally's body
slammed to the pavement. Dana stood there, frozen, unbelieving. People
around her were screaming. The sound of rapid sniper fire came closer,
and Dana began to tremble uncontrollably. Hands grabbed her and rushed
her down the street. She was fighting them, trying to free herself.

No! We have to go back. We haven't used up our ten minutes. Waste
not, want not... it was wrong to waste things. "Finish your soup,
darling. Children in China are starving." You think you're some kind
of God up there, sitting on a white cloud? Well, let me tell you
something. You're a fake. A real God would never, never, never let
Watty's head be blown off. Wally was expecting his first grandson. Are
you listening to me? Are you? Are you?

She was in a state of shock, unaware that she was being led through a
back street to the car.

When Dana opened her eyes, she was in her bed. Benn Al-bert son and
Jean Paul Hubert were standing over her.

Dana looked up into their faces. "It happened, didn't it?" She
squeezed her eyes tightly shut.

"I'm so sorry," Jean Paul said. "It's an awful thing to see. You're
lucky you weren't killed."

The telephone jarred the stillness of the room. Benn picked it up.
"Hello." He listened a moment "Yes. Hold on." He turned to Dana.
"It's Matt Baker. Are you able to talk to him?"

"Yes." Dana sat up. After a moment, she rose and walked over to the
telephone. "Hello." Her throat was dry, and it was difficult to
speak.

Matt Baker's voice boomed over the line. "I want you to come home,
Dana."

Her voice was a whisper. "Yes. I want to come home."

"I'll arrange for you to be on the first plane out of there."

"Thank you." She dropped the telephone.

Jean Paul and Benn helped her back into bed. "I'm sorry," Jean Paul
said, again. "There's there's nothing anyone can say." Tears were
running down her cheeks. "Why did they kill him? He never harmed
anyone. What's happening? People are being slaughtered like animals
and no one cares. No one cares!" Benn said, "Dana, there's nothing we
can do about " "There has to be!" Dana's voice was filled with fury.
"We have to make them care. This war isn't about bombed-out churches
or buildings or streets. It's about people innocent people getting
their heads blown off. Those are the stories we should be doing.
That's the only way to make this war real." She turned to Benn and
took a deep breath. "I'm staying, Benn. I'm not going to

let them
scare me away." He was watching her, concerned. "Dana, are you sure
you ?" "I'm sure. I know what I have to do now. Will you call Matt
and tell him?" He said reluctantly, "If that's what you really want."
Dana nodded. "It's what I really want." She watched Benn leave the
room. Jean Paul said, "Well, I had better go and let you " "No." For
an instant, Dana's mind was filled with a vision of Wally's head
exploding, and his body falling to the ground. "No," Dana said. She
looked up at Jean Paul. "Please stay. I need you." Jean Paul sat
down on the bed. And Dana took him in her arms and held him close to
her.

The following morning, Dana said to Benn Albertson, "Can you get hold
of a cameraman? Jean Paul told me about an orphanage in Kosovo that's
just been bombed. I want to go there and cover it."

"I'll round up someone."

"Thanks, Benn. I'll go on ahead and meet you there."

"Be careful."

"Don't worry."

Jovan was waiting for Dana in the alley.

"We're going to Kosovo," Dana told him.

Jovan turned to look at her. "That is dangerous, madam. The only road
there is through the woods, and "

"We've already had our share of bad luck, Jovan. We'll be

all
right."

"As you wish."

They sped through the city, and fifteen minutes later were driving
through a heavily forested area. "How much farther?" Dana asked.
"Not far. We should be there in " And at that moment, the Land Rover
struck a land mine.

Eleven.

As election day approached, the presidential race became too close to
call. "We've got to win Ohio," Peter Tager said. "That's twenty-one
electoral votes. We're all right with Alabama that's nine votes and we
have Florida's twenty-five votes." He held up a chart. "Illinois,
twenty-two votes ... New York, thirty-three, and California,
forty-four. It's just too damned early to call it."

Everyone was concerned except Senator Davis. "I've got a nose," he
said. "I can smell victory."

In a Frankfort hospital, Miriam Friedland was still in a coma.

On election day, the first Tuesday in November, Leslie stayed home to
watch the returns on television. Oliver Russell won by more than two
million popular votes and a huge majority of electoral votes. Oliver
Russell was the president now, the biggest target in the world. No one
had followed the election campaign more closely than Leslie Stewart

Chambers. She had been busily expanding her empire and had acquired a
chain of newspapers and television and radio stations across the United
States, as well as in England, Australia, and Brazil. "When are you
going to have enough?" her chief editor, Darin Solana, asked. "Soon,"
Leslie said. "Soon." There was one more step she had to take, and the
last piece fell into place at a dinner party in Scortsdale. A guest
said, "I heard confidentially that Margaret Port-man is getting a
divorce." Margaret Portman was the owner of the Washington Tribune, in
the nation's capital. Leslie had no comment, but early the following
morning, she was on the telephone with Chad Morton, one of her
attorneys. "I want you to find out if the Washington Tribune is for
sale." The answer came back later that day. "I don't know how you
heard about it, Mrs. Chambers, but it looks as though you could be
right. Mrs. Portman and her husband are quietly getting a divorce,
and they're dividing up their property. I think Washington Tribune
Enterprises is going up for sale."

"I want to buy it."

"You're talking about a mega deal Washington Tribune Enterprises owns
a newspaper chain, a magazine, a television network, and "

"I want it."

That afternoon, Leslie and Chad Morton were on their way to
Washington,

D.C.

Leslie telephoned Margaret Portman, whom she had met casually a few
years earlier. "I'm in Washington," Leslie said, "and I " "I know."
Word gets around fast, Leslie thought. "I heard that you might be
interested in selling Tribune Enterprises." "Possibly." "I wonder if
you would arrange a tour of the paper for me?" "Are you interested in
buying it, Leslie?" "Possibly." Margaret Portman sent for Matt Baker.
"Do you know who Leslie Chambers is?" "The Ice Princess. Sure."
"She'll be here in a few minutes. I'd like you to take her on a tour
of the plant."

Everyone at the Tribune was aware of the impending sale.

"It would be a mistake to sell the Tribune to Leslie Chambers," Matt
Baker said flatly.

"What makes you say that?"

"First of all, I doubt if she really knows a damn thing about the
newspaper business. Have you looked at what she's done to the other
papers she bought? She's turned respectable newspapers into cheap
tabloids. She'll destroy the Tribune. She's " He looked up. Leslie
Chambers was standing in the doorway, listening.

Margaret Portman spoke up. "Leslie! How nice to see you. This is
Matt Baker, our editor in chief of Tribune Enterprises."

They exchanged cool greetings.

"Matt is going to show you around."

"I'm looking forward to it."

Matt Baker took a deep breath. "Right. Let's get started."

At the beginning of the tour, Matt Baker said condescendingly, "The
structure is like this: At the top is the editor in chief " "That would
be you, Mr. Baker." "Right. And under me, the managing editor and
the editorial staff. That includes Metro, National, Foreign, Sports,
Business, Life and Style, People, Calendar, Books, Real Estate, Travel,
Food.... I'm probably leaving a few out." "Amazing. How many
employees does Washington Tribune Enterprises have, Mr. Baker?" "Over
five thousand."

They passed a copy desk. "Here's where the news editor lays out the
pages. He's the one who decides where the photos are going to go and
which stories appear on which pages. The copy desk writes the
headlines, edits the stories, and then puts them together in the
composing room." "Fascinating." "Are you interested in seeing the
printing plants?" "Oh, yes. I'd like to see everything." He mumbled
something under his breath. "I'm sorry?" "I said, "Fine." " They
took the elevator down and walked over to the next building. The
printing plant was four stories high and the size of four football
fields. Everything in the huge space was automated. There were thirty
robot carts in the building, carrying enormous rolls of

paper that they
dropped off at various stations. Baker explained, "Each roll of paper
weighs about twenty-five hundred pounds. If you unrolled one, it would
be eight miles long. The paper goes through the presses at twenty-one
miles an hour. Some of the bigger carts can carry sixteen rolls at
once." There were six presses, three on each side of the room. Leslie
and Matt Baker stood there and watched as the newspapers were
automatically assembled, cut, folded, put into bales, and delivered to
the trucks waiting to carry them off. "In the old days it took about
thirty men to do what one man can do today," Matt Baker said. "The age
of technology."

Leslie looked at him a moment. "The age of downsizing." "I don't know
if you're interested in the economics of the operation?" Matt Baker
asked dryly. "Perhaps you'd prefer your lawyer or accountant to " "I'm
very interested, Mr. Baker. Your editorial budget is fifteen million
dollars. Your daily circulation is eight hundred and sixteen thousand,
four hundred and seventy-four, and one million, one hundred and forty
thousand, four hundred and ninety-eight on Sunday, and your advertising
is sixty-eight point two." Matt looked at her and blinked. "With the
ownership of all your newspapers, your daily circulation is over two
million, with two million four Sunday circulation. Of course, that's
not the largest paper in the world, is it, Mr. Baker? Two of the
largest newspapers in the world are printed in London.

The Sun is the
biggest, with a circulation of four million daily. The
Daily Mirror
sells over three million." He took a deep breath. "I'm
sorry. I
didn't realize you " "In Japan, there are over two hundred
dailies,
including Asahi Shimbun, Mainchi Shimbun, and Yomiuri
Shimbun. Do you
follow me?" "Yes. I apologize if I seemed patronizing."
"Accepted,
Mr. Baker. Let's go back to Mrs. Portman's office."

The next morning, Leslie was in the executive conference
room of the
Washington Tribune, facing Mrs. Portman and half a dozen
attorneys.

"Let's talk about price," Leslie said. The discussion
lasted four
hours, and when it was over, Leslie Stewart Chambers was
the owner of
Washington Tribune Enterprises.

It was more expensive than Leslie had anticipated. It did
not
matter.

There was something more important.

The day the deal was finalized, Leslie sent for Matt
Baker. "What are
your plans?" Leslie asked. "I'm leaving." She looked at
him
curiously. "Why?" "You have quite a reputation. People
don't like
working for you. I think the word they use most is
'ruthless." I
don't need that. This is a good newspaper, and I hate to
leave it, but
I have more job offers than I can handle." "How long have
you worked
here?" "Fifteen years." "And you're going to just throw
that away?"

"I'm not throwing anything away, I'm " She looked him in the eye.
"Listen to me. I think the Tribune is a good newspaper, too, but I
want it to be a great newspaper. I want you to help me." "No. I
don't "

"Six months. Try it for six months. We'll start by doubling your
salary." He studied her for a long moment. Young and beautiful and
intelligent. And yet... He had an uneasy feeling about her. "Who will
be in charge here?" She smiled. "You're the editor in chief of
Washington Tribune Enterprises. You will be." And he believed her.

Twelve.

It had been six months since Dana's Land Rover had been blown up. She
escaped with nothing worse than a concussion, a cracked rib, a broken
wrist, and painful bruises. Jovan suffered a fractured leg and scrapes
and bruises. Matt Baker had telephoned Dana that night and ordered her
to return to Washington, but the incident had made Dana more determined
than ever to stay. "These people are desperate," Dana told him. "I
can't just walk away from this. If you order me home, then I quit."
"Are you blackmailing me?" "Yes." "That's what I thought," Matt
snapped. "I don't let anyone blackmail me. Do you understand?" Dana
waited.

"What about a leave of absence?" he asked.

"I don't need a leave of absence." She could hear his

sigh over the
phone.

"All right. Stay there. But, Dana "

"Yes?"

"Promise me that you'll be careful."

From outside the hotel, Dana could hear the sound of machine-gun fire.
"Right."

The city had been under heavy attack all night. Dana had been unable
to sleep. Each explosion of a mortar landing meant another building
destroyed, another family homeless, or worse, dead. Early in the
morning, Dana and her crew were out on the street, ready to shoot. Benn
Albertson waited for the thunder of a mortar to fade away, then nodded
to Dana. "Ten seconds." "Ready," Dana said. Benn pointed a finger,
and Dana turned away from the ruins behind her and faced the television
camera. "This is a city that is slowly disappearing from the face of
the earth. With its electricity cut off, its eyes have been put
out.... Its television and radio stations have been shut down, and it
has no ears.... All public transportation has come to a halt, so it has
lost its legs...." The camera panned to show a deserted, bombed-out
playground, with the rusty skeletons of swings and slides.

"In another life, children played here, and the sound of their laughter
filled the air." Mortar fire could be heard again in the near
distance. An air raid alarm suddenly sounded. The people

walking the
streets behind Dana continued as though they had heard nothing. "The
sound you're hearing is another air raid alarm. It's the signal for
people to run and hide. But the citizens of Sarajevo have found that
there is no place to hide, so they walk on in their own silence. Those
who can, flee the country, and give up their apartments and all their
possessions. Too many who stay, die. It's a cruel choice. There are
rumors of peace. Too many rumors, too little peace. Will it come? And
when? Will the children come out of their cellars and use this
playground again one day? Nobody knows. They can only hope. This is
Dana Evans reporting from Sarajevo for WTE." The red light on the
camera blinked off. "Let's get out of here," Benn said. Andy Casarez,
the new cameraman, hurriedly started to pack up his gear. A young boy
was standing on the sidewalk, watching Dana. He was a street urchin,
dressed in filthy, ragged clothes and torn shoes. Intense brown eyes
flashed out of a face streaked with dirt. His right arm was missing.
Dana watched the boy studying her. Dana smiled. "Hello." There was
no reply. Dana shrugged and turned to Benn. "Let's go."

A few minutes later, they were on their way back to the Holiday Inn.

The Holiday Inn was filled with newspaper, radio, and television
reporters, and they formed a disparate family. They were rivals, but
because of the dangerous circumstances they found themselves in, they

were always ready to help one another. They covered breaking stories together:

There was a riot in Montenegro.... There was a bombing in Vukovar.... A hospital had been shelled in Petrovo Selo.... Jean Paul Hubert was gone. He had been given another assignment, and Dana missed him terribly.

As Dana was leaving the hotel one morning, the little boy she had seen on the street was standing in the alley. Jovan opened the door of the replacement Land Rover for Dana. "Good morning, madam." "Good morning." The boy stood there, staring at Dana. She walked over to him. "Good morning." There was no reply. Dana said to Jovan, "How do you say 'good morning' in Slovene?" The little boy answered, "Dobro jutro." Dana turned to him. "So you understand English." "Maybe."
"What's your name?"

"Kemal."

"How old are you, Kemal?"

He turned and walked away.

"He's frightened of strangers," Jovan said.

Dana looked after the boy. "I don't blame him. So am I."

Four hours later, when the Land Rover returned to the alley in back of the Holiday Inn, Kemal was waiting near the entrance.

As Dana got out of the car, Kemal said, "Twelve."

"What?" Then Dana remembered. "Oh." He was small for
his age. She
looked at his empty right shirtsleeve and started to ask
him a
question, then stopped herself. "Where do you live,
Kemal? Can we
take you home?" She watched him turn and walk away.

Jovan said, "He has no manners."

Dana said quietly, "Maybe he lost them when he lost his
arm."

That evening in the hotel dining room, the reporters were
talking about
the new rumors of an imminent peace. "The UN has finally
gotten
involved," Gabriella Orsi declared. "It's about time."
"If you ask
me, it's too late." "It's never too late," Dana said
quietly. The
following morning, two news stories came over the wires.
The first one
was about a peace agreement brokered by the United States
and the
United Nations. The second story was that Oslobodjenje,
Sarajevo's
newspaper, had been bombed out of existence.

"Our Washington bureaus are covering the peace agreement,"
Dana told
Benn. "Let's do a story on Oslobodjenje."

Dana was standing in front of the demolished building that
had once
housed Oslobodjenje. The camera's red light was on.
"People die here
every day," Dana said into the lens, "and buildings are
destroyed. But
this building was murdered. It housed the only free
newspaper in
Sarajevo, Oslobodjenje. It was a newspaper that dared to
tell the
truth. When it was bombed out of its headquarters, it was

moved into
the basement, to keep the presses alive. When there were
no more
newsstands to sell the papers from, its reporters went out
on the
streets to peddle them themselves. They were selling more
than
newspapers. They were selling freedom. With the death of
Oslobodjenje, another piece of freedom has died here."

In his office, Matt Baker was watching the news broadcast.
"Dammit,
she's good!" He turned to his assistant. "I want her to
have her own
satellite truck. Move on it." "Yes, sir."

When Dana returned to her room, there was a visitor
waiting for her.
Colonel Gordan Divjak was lounging in a chair when Dana
walked in. She
stopped, startled. "They didn't tell me I had a visitor."
"This is
not a social visit." His beady black eyes focused on her.
"I watched
your broadcast about Oslobodjenje." Dana studied him
warily. "Yes?"
"You were permitted to come into our country to report,
not to make
judgments." "I didn't make any " "Do not interrupt me.
Your idea of
freedom is not necessarily our idea of freedom. Do you
understand me?"
"No. I'm afraid I " "Then let me explain it to you, Miss
Evans. You
are a guest in my country. Perhaps you are a spy for your
government."
"I am not a " "Do not interrupt me. I warned you at the
airport. We
are not playing games. We are at war. Anyone involved in
espionage
will be executed." His words were all the more chilling
because they
were spoken softly. He got to his feet. "This is your
last warning."

Dana watched him leave. I'm not going to kt him frighten me, she
thought defiantly. She was frightened.

A care package arrived from Matt Baker. It was an enormous box filled
with candy, granola bars, canned foods, and a dozen other nonperishable
items. Dana took it into the lobby to share it with the other
reporters. They were delighted.

"Now, that's what I call a boss," Satomi Asaka said.

"How do I get a job with the Washington Tribune?" Juan Santos joked.

Kemal was waiting in the alley again. The frayed, thin jacket he had
on looked as though it was about to fall apart.

"Good morning, Kemal."

He stood there, silent, watching her from under half-closed lids.

"I'm going shopping. Would you like to go with me?"

No answer.

"Let me put it another way," Dana said, exasperated. She opened the
back door of the vehicle. "Get in the car. Now!"

The boy stood there a moment, shocked, then slowly moved toward the
car.

Dana and Jovan watched him climb into the backseat.

Dana said to Jovan, "Can you find a department store or clothing shop
that's open?"

"I know one."

"Let's go there."

They rode in silence for the first few minutes.

"Do you have a mother or father, Kemal?"

He shook his head.

"Where do you live?" He shrugged.

Dana felt him move closer to her as though to absorb the warmth of her
body.

The clothing store was in the Bascarsija, the old market of Sarajevo.
The front had been bombed out, but the store was open. Dana took
Kemal's left hand and led him into the store. A clerk said, "Can I
help you?" "Yes. I want to buy a jacket for a friend of mine." She
looked at Kemal. "He's about his size." "This way, please." In the
boy's section there was a rack of jackets. Dana turned to Kemal.
"Which one do you like?" Kemal stood there, saying nothing. Dana said
to the clerk, "We'll take the brown one." She looked at Kemal's
trousers. "And I think we need a pair of trousers and some new shoes."
When they left the store half an hour later, Kemal was dressed in his
new outfit. He slid into the backseat of the car without a word.
"Don't you know how to say thank you?" Jovan demanded angrily. Kemal
burst into tears. Dana put her arms around him. "It's all right," she
said. "It's all right." What kind of a world does this to children?

When they returned to the hotel, Dana watched Kemal turn and walk away
without a word.

"Where does someone like that live?" Dana asked Jovan.

"On the streets, madam. There are hundreds of orphans in Sarajevo like
him. They have no homes, no families...."

"How do they survive?"

He shrugged. "I do not know."

The next day, when Dana walked out of the hotel, Kemal was waiting for
her, dressed in his new outfit. He had washed his face.

The big news at the luncheon table was the peace treaty and whether it
would work. Dana decided to go back to visit Professor Mladic Staka
and ask what he thought about it. He looked even more frail than the
last time she had seen him. "I am happy to see you, Miss Evans. I
hear you are doing wonderful broadcasts, but " He shrugged.
"Unfortunately, I have no electricity for my television set. What can
I do for you?" "I wanted to get your opinion of the new peace treaty,
Professor." He leaned back in his chair and said thoughtfully, "It is
interesting to me that in Dayton, Ohio, they made a decision about what
is going to happen to the future of Sarajevo."

"They've agreed to a troika, a three-person presidency, composed of a
Muslim, a Croat, and a Serb. Do you think it can work, Professor?"

"Only if you believe in miracles." He frowned. "There will be
eighteen national legislative bodies and another hundred and nine
different local governments. It is a Tower of political Babel. It is
what you Americans call a 'shotgun marriage." None of them wants to
give up their autonomy. They insist on having their own flags, their
own license plates, their own currency." He shook his head. "It is a
morning peace. Beware of the night."

Dana Evans had gone beyond being a mere reporter and was becoming an
international legend. What came through in her television broadcasts
was an intelligent human being filled with passion. And because Dana
cared, her viewers cared, and shared her feelings.

Matt Baker began getting calls from other news outlets saying that they
wanted to syndicate Dana Evans's broadcasts. He was delighted for her.
She went over there to do good, he thought, and she's going to wind up
doing well.

With her own new satellite truck, Dana was busier than ever. She was
no longer at the mercy of the Yugoslav satellite company She and Benn
decided what stories they wanted to do, and Dana would write them and
broadcast them. Some of the stories were broadcast live, and others
were taped. Dana and Benn and Andy would go out on the streets and
photograph whatever background was needed, then Dana would tape her
commentary in an editing room and send it back on the line to

Washington.

At lunchtime, in the hotel dining room, large platters of sandwiches
were placed in the center of the table. Journalists were busily
helping themselves. Roderick Munn, from the BBC, walked into the room
with an AP clipping in his hand. "Listen to this, everybody." He read
the clipping aloud. " "Dana Evans, a foreign correspondent for WTE, is
now being syndicated by a dozen news stations. Miss Evans has been
nominated for the coveted Peabody Award...." " The story went on from
there. "Aren't we lucky to be associated with somebody so famous?"
one of the reporters said sarcastically. At that moment, Dana walked
into the dining room. "Hi, everybody. I don't have time for lunch
today. I'm going to take some sandwiches with me." She scooped up
several sandwiches and covered them with paper napkins. "See you
later." They watched in silence as she left. When Dana got outside,
Kemal was there, waiting. "Good afternoon, Kemal." No response.

"Get into the car."

Kemal slid into the backseat. Dana handed him a sandwich and sat
there, watching him silently wolf it down. She handed him another
sandwich, and he started to eat it.

"Slowly," Dana said.

"Where to?" Jovan asked.

Dana turned to Kemal. "Where to?" He looked at her

uncomprehendingly
"We're taking you home, Kemal. Where do you live?"

He shook his head.

"I need to know. Where do you live?"

Twenty minutes later, the car stopped in front of a large vacant lot
near the banks of the Miljacka. Dozens of big cardboard boxes were
scattered around, and the lot was littered with debris of all kinds.
Dana got out of the car and turned to Kemal. "Is this where you live?"
He reluctantly nodded. "And other boys live here, too?" He nodded
again. "I want to do a story about this, Kemal." He shook his head.
"No." "Why not?" "The police will come and take us away. Don't."
Dana studied him a moment. "All right. I promise."

The next morning, Dana moved out of her room at the Holiday Inn. When
she did not appear at breakfast, Gabriella Orsi from the Altre Station
in Italy asked, "Where's Dana?"

Roderick Munn replied, "She's gone. She's rented a farmhouse to live
in. She said she wanted to be by herself."

Nikolai Petrovich, the Russian from Gorizont 22, said, "We would all
like to be by ourselves. So we are not good enough for her?"

There was a general feeling of disapproval.

The following afternoon, another large care package arrived for Dana.

Nikolai Petrovich said, "Since she is not here, we might

as well enjoy
it, eh?"

The hotel clerk said, "I'm sorry. Miss Evans is having it picked
up."

A few minutes later, Kemal arrived. The reporters watched him take the
package and leave.

"She doesn't even share with us anymore," Juan Santos grumbled. "I
think her publicity has gone to her head."

During the next week, Dana filed her stories, but she did not appear at
the hotel again. The resentment against her was growing.

Dana and her ego were becoming the main topic of conversation. A few
days later, when another huge care package was delivered to the hotel,
Nikolai Petrovich went to the hotel clerk. "Is Miss Evans having this
package picked up?" "Yes, sir." The Russian hurried back into the
dining room. "There is another package," he said. "Someone is going
to pick it up. Why don't we follow him and tell Miss Evans our opinion
of reporters who think they're too good for everyone else?" There was
a chorus of approval. When Kemal arrived to pick up the package,
Nikolai said to him, "Are you taking that to Miss Evans?" Kemal
nodded. "She asked to see us. We'll go along with you." Kemal looked
at him a moment, then shrugged. "We'll take you in one of our cars,"
Nikolai Petrovich said. "You tell us where to go." Ten minutes later,
a caravan of cars was making its way along deserted side

streets. On
the outskirts of the city, Kemal pointed to an old
bombed-out
farmhouse. The cars came to a stop. "You go ahead and
bring her the
package," Nikolai said. "We're going to surprise her."
They watched
Kemal walk into the farmhouse. They waited a moment, then
moved toward
the farmhouse and burst in through the front door. They
stopped, in
shock. The room was filled with children of all ages,
sizes, and
colors. Most of them were crippled. A dozen army cots had
been set up
along the walls. Dana was parceling out the contents of
the care
package to the children when the door flew open. She
looked up in
astonishment as the group charged in. "What what are you
doing here?"
Roderick Munn looked around, embarrassed. "I'm sorry,
Dana. We made a
a mistake. We thought " Dana turned to face the group. "I
see.
They're orphans. They have nowhere to go and no one to
take care of
them. Most of them were in a hospital when it was bombed.
If the
police find them, they'll be put in what passes for an
orphanage, and
they'll die there. If they stay here, they'll die. I've
been trying to
figure out a way to get them out of the country, but so
far, nothing
has worked." She looked at the group pleadingly. "Do you
have any
ideas?" Roderick Munn said slowly, "I think I have.
There's a Red
Cross plane leaving for Paris tonight. The pilot is a
friend of mine."
Dana asked hopefully, "Would you talk to him?" Munn
nodded. "Yes."
Nikolai Petrovich said, "Wait! We can't get involved in

anything like
that. They'll throw us all out of the country." "You don't have to be
involved," Munn told him. "We'll handle it." "I'm against it,"
Nikolai said stubbornly. "It will place us all in danger." "What about
the children?" Dana asked. "We're talking about their lives."

Late in the afternoon, Roderick Munn came to see Dana. "I talked to my
friend. He said he would be happy to take the children to Paris, where
they'll be safe. He has two boys of his own."

Dana was thrilled. "That's wonderful. Thank you so much."

Munn looked at her. "It is we who should thank you."

At eight o'clock that evening, a van with the Red Cross insignia on its
sides pulled up in front of the farmhouse. The driver blinked the
lights, and under the cover of darkness, Dana and the children hurried
into the van. Fifteen minutes later, it was rolling toward Butmir
Airport. The airport had been temporarily closed except to the Red
Cross planes that delivered supplies and took away the seriously
wounded. The drive was the longest ride of Dana's life. It seemed to
take forever. When she saw the lights of the airport ahead, she said
to the children, "We're almost there." Kemal was squeezing her hand.
"You'll be fine," Dana assured him. "All of you will be taken care
of." And she thought, I'm going to miss you. At the airport, a guard
waved the van through, and it drove up to a waiting cargo

plane with
the Red Cross markings painted on the fuselage. The pilot was standing
next to the plane.

He hurried up to Dana. "For God's sake, you're late! Get them aboard,
fast. We were due to take off twenty minutes ago." Dana herded the
children up the ramp into the plane. Kemal was the last. He turned to
Dana, his lips trembling. "Will I see you again?" "You bet you will,"
Dana said. She hugged him and held him close for a moment, saying a
silent prayer. "Get aboard now." Moments later, the door closed.
There was a roar of the engines, and the plane began to taxi down the
runway. Dana and Munn stood there, watching. At the end of the
runway, the plane soared into the air and speared into the eastern sky,
banking north toward Paris. "That was a wonderful thing you did," the
driver said. "I want you to know " A car screeched to a stop behind
them, and they turned. Colonel Gordan Divjak jumped out of the car and
glared up at the sky where the plane was disappearing. At his side was
Nikolai Petrovich, the Russian journalist. Colonel Divjak turned to
Dana. "You are under arrest. I warned you that the punishment for
espionage is death." Dana took a deep breath. "Colonel, if you're
going to put me on trial for espionage " He looked into Dana's eyes and
said softly, "Who said anything about a trial?"

Thirteen.

The inaugural celebrations, the parades, and the

swearing-in ceremonies
were over, and Oliver was eager to begin his presidency. Washington,
D.C." was probably the only city anywhere completely devoted to and
obsessed with politics. It was the power hub of the world, and Oliver
Russell was the center of that hub. It seemed that everyone was
connected in one way or another to the federal government. In the
metropolitan area of Washington, there were fifteen thousand lobbyists
and more than five thousand journalists, all of them nursing at the
mother's milk of government. Oliver Russell remembered John Kennedy's
sly put-down: "Washington, D.C." is a city of southern efficiency and
northern charm."

On the first day of his presidency, Oliver wandered around the White
House with Jan. They were familiar with its statistics: 132 rooms, 32
bathrooms, 29 fireplaces, 3 elevators, a swimming pool, putting green,
tennis court, jogging track, exercise room, horseshoe pit, bowling
alley, and movie theater, and eighteen acres of beautifully tended
grounds. But actually living in it, being a part of it, was
overwhelming.

"It's like a dream, isn't it?" Jan sighed.

Oliver took her hand. "I'm glad we're sharing it, darling." And he
meant it. Jan had become a wonderful companion. She was always there
for him, supportive and caring. More and more, he found that he
enjoyed being with her.

When Oliver returned to the Oval Office, Peter Tager was waiting to see
him. Oliver's first appointment had been to make Tager his chief of
staff.

Oliver said, "I still can't believe this, Peter." Peter Tager smiled.
"The people believe it. They voted you in, Mr. President."

Oliver looked up at him. "It's still Oliver." "All right. When we're
alone. But you have to realize that from this moment on, anything you
do can affect the entire world. Anything you say could shake up the
economy or have an impact on a hundred other countries around the
globe. You have more power than any other person in the world."

The intercom buzzed. "Mr. President, Senator Davis is here."

"Send him in, Heather." Tager sighed. "I'd better get started. My
desk looks like a paper mountain." The door opened and Todd Davis
walked in. "Peter ..." "Senator ..." The two men shook hands. Tager
said, "I'll see you later, Mr. President." Senator Davis walked over
to Oliver's desk and nodded. "That desk fits you just fine, Oliver. I
can't tell you what a real thrill it is for me to see you sitting
there." "Thank you, Todd. I'm still trying to get used to it. I mean
Adams sat here ... and Lincoln ... and Roosevelt..." Senator Davis
laughed. "Don't let that scare you. Before they became legends, they

were men just like you, sitting there trying to do the right thing.
Putting their asses in that chair terrified them all, in the beginning.
I just left Jan. She's in seventh heaven. She's going to make a great
First Lady." "I know she is." "By the way, I have a little list here
I'd like to discuss with you, Mr. President." The emphasis on "Mr.
President" was jovial. "Of course, Todd." Senator Davis slid the list
across the desk. "What is this?" "Just a few suggestions I have for
your cabinet." "Oh. Well, I've already decided " "I thought you might
want to look these over." "But there's no point in " "Look them over,
Oliver." The senator's voice had cooled.

Oliver's eyes narrowed. "Todd ..."

Senator Davis held up a hand. "Oliver, I don't want you to think for
one minute that I'm trying to impose my will or my wishes on you. You
would be wrong. I put together that list because I think they're the
best men who can help you serve your country. I'm a patriot, Oliver,
and I'm not ashamed of it. This country means everything to me." There
was a catch in his voice. "Everything. If you think I helped put you
in this office just because you're my son-in-law, you're gravely
mistaken. I fought to make sure you got here because I firmly believe
you're the man best suited for the job. That's what I care most
about." He tapped a finger on the piece of paper. "And these men can
help you do that job."

Oliver sat there, silent.

"I've been in this town for a lot of years, Oliver. And do you know
what I've learned? That there's nothing sadder than a one-term
president. And do you know why? Because during the first four years,
he's just beginning to get an idea of what he can do to make this
country better. He has all those dreams to fulfill. And just when
he's ready to do that just when he's ready to really make a difference"
he glanced around the office "someone else moves in here, and those
dreams just vanish. Sad to think about, isn't it? All those men with
grand dreams who serve only one term. Did you know that since McKinley
took office in 1897, more than half the presidents who followed him
were one-term presidents? But you, Oliver I'm going to see to it that
you're a two-term president. I want you to be able to fulfill all your
dreams. I'm going to see to it that you're reelected."

Senator Davis looked at his watch and rose. "I have to go. We have a
quorum call at the Senate. I'll see you at dinner tonight." He walked
out the door.

Oliver looked after him for a long time. Then he reached down and
picked up the list Senator Todd Davis had left.

In his dream, Miriam Friedland awakened and sat up in bed. A policeman
was at her bedside. He looked down at her and said, "Now you can tell
us who did this to you."

"Yes."

He woke up, soaked in perspiration.

Early the following morning, Oliver telephoned the hospital where
Miriam was. "I'm afraid there's no change, Mr. President," the chief
of staff told him. "Frankly, it doesn't look good." Oliver said
hesitantly, "She has no family. If you don't think she's going to make
it, would it be more humane to take her off the life-support systems?"
"I think we should wait a little while longer and see what happens,"
the doctor said. "Sometimes there's a miracle."

Jay Perkins, chief of protocol, was briefing the president. "There are
one hundred and forty-seven diplomatic missions in Washington, Mr.
President. The blue book the Diplomatic List lists the name of every
representative of a foreign government and spouse. The green book the
Social List names the top diplomats, Washington residents, and members
of Congress."

He handed Oliver several sheets of paper. "This is a list of the
potential foreign ambassadors you will receive."

Oliver looked down the list and found the Italian ambassador and his
wife: Atilio Picone and Sylva. Sylva. Oliver asked innocently, "Will
they bring their wives with them?"

"No. The wives will be introduced later. I would suggest that you
begin seeing the candidates as quickly as possible."

"Fine."

Perkins said, "I'll try to arrange it so that by next Saturday, all the
foreign ambassadors will be accredited. You might want to consider
having a White House dinner to honor them."

"Good idea." OliVer glanced again at the list on his desk. Atilio and
Sylva Picone.

Saturday evening, the State Dining Room was decorated with flags from
the various countries represented by the foreign ambassadors. Oliver
had spoken with Atilio Picone two days earlier when he had presented
his credence papers. "How is Mrs. Picone?" Oliver had asked. There
was a small pause. "My wife is fine. Thank you, Mr. President."

The dinner was going beautifully. Oliver went from table to table,
chatting with his guests and charming them all. Some of the most
important people in the world were gathered in that room.

Oliver Russell approached three ladies who were socially prominent and
married to important men. But they were movers and shakers in their
own right. "Leonore ... Delores .. . Carol..."

As Oliver was making his way across the room, Sylva Pi-cone went up to
him and held out her hand. "This is a moment I've been looking forward
to." Her eyes were sparkling.

"I, too," Oliver murmured.

"I knew you were going to be elected." It was almost a

whisper.

"Can we talk later?"

There was no hesitation. "Of course."

After dinner, there was dancing in the grand ballroom to the music of
the Marine Band. Oliver watched Jan dancing, and he thought: What a
beautiful woman. What a great body. The evening was a huge success.

The following week, on the front page of the Washington Tribune, the
headline blazed out: PRESIDENT ACCUSED OF CAMPAIGN FRAUD.

Oliver stared at it in disbelief. It was the worst timing possible.
How could this have happened? And then he suddenly realized how it had
happened. The answer was in front of him on the masthead of the
newspaper: "Publisher, Leslie Stewart."

The following week, a front-page item in the Washington Tribune read:

PRESIDENT TO BE QUESTIONED ABOUT FALSIFIED

KENTUCKY STATE INCOME TAX RETURNS.

Two weeks later, another story appeared on the front page of the
Tribune: FORMER ASSISTANT TO PRESIDENT RUSSELL PLANS

TO FILE LAWSUIT CHARGING SEXUAL HARASSMENT.

The door to the Oval Office flew open and Jan walked in. "Have you
seen the morning paper?"

"Yes, I "

"How could you do this to us, Oliver? You "

"Wait a minute! Don't you see what's happening, Jan? Leslie Stewart
is behind it. I'm sure she bribed that woman to do this. She's trying
to get her revenge because I jilted her for you. All right. She got
it. It's over."

Senator Davis was on the telephone. "Oliver. I would like to see you
in one hour." "I'll be here, Todd." Oliver was in the small library
when Todd Davis arrived. Oliver rose to greet him. "Good morning."
"Like hell it's a good morning." Senator Davis's voice was filled with
fury. "That woman is going to destroy us."

"No, she's not. She just " "Everyone reads that damned gossip rag, and
people believe what they read." "Todd, this is going to blow over and
" "It's not going to blow over. Did you hear the editorial on WTE this
morning? It was about who our next president is going to be. You were
at the bottom of the list. Leslie Stewart is out to get you. You must
stop her. What's the line 'hell hath no fury ..."?" "There's another
adage, Todd, about freedom of the press. There's nothing we can do
about this." Senator Davis looked at Oliver speculatively. "But there
is." "What are you talking about?" "Sit down." The two men sat.
"The woman is obviously still in love with you, Oliver. This is her
way of punishing you for what you did to her. Never argue with someone
who buys ink by the ton. My advice is to make peace." "How do I do

that?" Senator Davis looked at Oliver's groin. "Use your head." "Wait
a minute, Todd! Are you suggesting that I ?" "What I'm suggesting is
that you cool her down. Let her know that you're sorry. I'm telling
you she still loves you. If she didn't, she wouldn't be doing this."
"What exactly do you expect me to do?" "Charm her, my boy. You did it
once, you can do it again. You've got to win her over. You're having
a State Department dinner here Friday evening. Invite her. You must
persuade her to stop what she's doing."

"I don't know how I can "

"I don't care how you do it. Perhaps you could take her away
somewhere, where you can have a quiet chat. I have a country house in
Virginia. It's very private. I'm going to Florida for the weekend,
and I've arranged for Jan to go with me." He took out a slip of paper
and some keys and handed them to Oliver. "Here are the directions and
the keys to the house."

Oliver was staring at him. "Jesus! You had this all planned? What if
Leslie won't what if she's not interested? If she refuses to go?"

Senator Davis rose. "She's interested. She'll go. I'll see you
Monday, Oliver. Good luck."

Oliver sat there for a long time. And he thought: No. I can't do this
to her again. I won't.

That evening as they were getting dressed for dinner, Jan

said,
"Oliver, Father asked me to go to Florida with him for the weekend.
He's getting some kind of award, and I think he wants to show off the
president's wife. Would you mind very much if I went? I know there's
a State Department dinner here Friday, so if you want me to stay ..."
"No, no. You go ahead. I'll miss you." And I am going to miss her,
he thought. As soon as I solve this problem with Leslie, I'm going to
start spending more time with Jan.

Leslie was on the telephone when her secretary came hurrying in. "Miss
Stewart "

"Can't you see I'm "

"President Russell is on line three."

Leslie looked at her a moment, then smiled. "Right." She said into
the phone, "I'll call you back."

She pressed the button on line three. "Hello."

"Leslie?"

"Hello, Oliver. Or should I call you Mr. President?"

"You can call me anything you like." He added lightly, "And have."
There was a silence. "Leslie, I want to see you."

"Are you sure this is a good idea?"

"I'm very sure."

"You're the president. I can't say no to you, can I?"

"Not if you're a patriotic American. There's a State

Department dinner
at the White House Friday night. Please come."

"What time?"

"Eight o'clock."

"All right. I'll be there."

She looked stunning in a long, clinging black knit
Mandarin-necked St.
John gown fastened in front with buttons over-coated in
twenty-two-karat gold. There was a revealing
fourteen-inch slit on the
left side of the dress.

The instant Oliver looked at her, memories came flooding
back. "Leslie
..."

i on

"Mr. President."

He took her hand, and it was moist. It's a sign, Oliver
thought. But
of what? Nervousness? Anger? Old memories? "I'm so
glad you came,
Leslie." "Yes. I am, too." "We'll talk later." Her
smile warmed
him. "Yes."

Two tables away from where Oliver was seated was a group
of Arab
diplomats. One of them, a swarthy man with sharply etched
features and
dark eyes, seemed to be staring intently at Oliver.

Oliver leaned over to Peter Tager and nodded toward the
Arab. "Who's
that?"

Tager took a quick look. "Ali al-Fulani. He's the
secretary at one of

the United Arab Emirates. Why do you ask?"

"No reason." Oliver looked again. The man's eyes were still focused
on him.

Oliver spent the evening working the room, making his guests feel
comfortable. Sylva was at one table, Leslie at another. It was not
until the evening was almost over that Oliver managed to get Leslie
alone for a moment. "We need to talk. I have a lot to tell you. Can
we meet somewhere?"

There was the faintest hesitation in her voice. "Oliver, perhaps it
would be better if we didn't "

"I have a house in Manassas, Virginia, about an hour out of Washington.
Will you meet me there?"

She looked into his eyes. This time there was no hesitation. "If you
want me to."

Oliver described the location of the house. "Tomorrow night at
eight?"

Leslie's voice was husky. "I'll be there."

At a National Security Council meeting the following morning, Director
of Central Intelligence James Frisch dropped a bombshell. "Mr.
President, we received word this morning that Libya is buying a variety
of atomic weapons from Iran and China. There's a strong rumor that
they're going to be used to attack Israel. It will take a day or two

to get a confirmation." Lou Werner, the secretary of state, said, "I
don't think we should wait. Let's protest now, in the strongest
possible terms." Oliver said to Werner, "See what additional
information you can get." The meeting lasted all morning. From time
to time, Oliver found himself thinking about the rendezvous with
Leslie. "Charm her, my boy.... You've got to win her over."

On Saturday evening, Oliver was in one of the White House staff cars,
driven by a trusted Secret Service agent, heading for Manassas,
Virginia. He was strongly tempted to cancel the rendezvous, but it was
too late. I'm worrying for no reason. She probably won't even show
up.

At eight o'clock, Oliver looked out the window and saw Leslie's car
pull into the driveway of the senator's house. He watched her get out
of the car and move toward the entrance. Oliver opened the front door.
The two of them stood there, silently staring at each other, and time
disappeared and somehow it was as though they had never been apart.
Oliver was the first to find his voice. "My God! Last night when I
saw you ... I had almost forgotten how beautiful you are." Oliver took
Leslie's hand, and they walked into the living room. "What would you
like to drink?" "I don't need anything. Thank you." Oliver sat down
next to her on the couch. "I have to ask you something, Leslie. Do
you hate me?" She shook her head slowly. "No. I thought

I hated
you." She smiled wryly. "In a way, I suppose that's the reason for my
success." "I don't understand." "I wanted to get back at you, Oliver.
I bought newspapers and television stations so that I could attack you.
You're the only man I've ever loved. And when you when you deserted
me, I I didn't think I could stand it." She was fighting back tears.
Oliver put his arm around her. "Leslie " And then his lips were on
hers, and they were kissing passionately. "Oh, my God," she said. "I
didn't expect this to happen." And they were in a fierce embrace, and
he took her hand and led her into the bedroom. They began undressing
each other. "Hurry, my darling," Leslie said. "Hurry..." And they
were in bed, holding each other, their bodies touching, remembering.
Their lovemaking was gentle and fierce, as it had been in the
beginning. And this was a new beginning. The two of them lay there,
happy, spent. "It's so funny," Leslie said. "What?" "All those
terrible things I published about you. I did it to get your
attention." She snuggled closer. "And I did, didn't I?" He grinned.
"I'll say." Leslie sat up and looked at him. "I'm so proud of you,
Oliver. The President of the United States." "I'm trying to be a damn
good one. That's what's really important to me. I want to make a
difference." Oliver looked at his watch. "I'm afraid I have to get
back." "Of course. I'll let you leave first." "When am I going to
see you again, Leslie?" "Anytime you want to." "We're

going to have
to be careful." "I know. We will be."

Leslie lay there, dreamily watching Oliver as he dressed.

When Oliver was ready to leave, he leaned over and said, "You're my
miracle."

"And you're mine. You always have been."

He kissed her. "I'll call you tomorrow."

Oliver hurried out to the car and was driven back to Washington. The
more things change, the more they stay the same, Oliver thought. I
have to be careful never to hurt her again. He picked up the car
telephone and dialed the number in Florida that Senator Davis had given
him.

The senator answered the phone himself. "Hello."

"It's Oliver."

"Where are you?"

"On my way back to Washington. I just called to tell you some good
news. We don't have to worry about that problem anymore. Everything
is under control."

"I can't tell you how glad I am to hear that." There was a note of
deep relief in Senator Davis's voice.

"I knew you would be, Todd."

The following morning, as Oliver was getting dressed, he picked up a
copy of the Washington Tribune. On the front page was a

photograph of
Senator Davis's country home in Manassas The caption
under it read:

PRESIDENT RUSSELL'S SECRET LOVE NEST.

Fourteen.

Oliver stared at the paper unbelievingly. How could she
have done
that? He thought about how passionate she had been in
bed. And he had
completely misread it. It was a passion filled with hate,
not love.
There's no way I can ever stop her, Oliver thought
despairingly.

Senator Todd Davis looked at the front-page story and was
aghast. He
understood the power of the press, and he knew how much
this vendetta
could cost him. I'll have to stop her myself, Senator
Davis decided.
When he got to his Senate office, he telephoned Leslie.
"It's been a
long time," Senator Davis said warmly. "Too long. I
think about you a
lot, Miss Stewart."

"I think about you, too, Senator Davis. In a way,
everything I have I
owe to you." He chuckled. "Not at all. When you had a
problem, I was
happy to be able to assist you." "Is there something I
can do for you,
Senator?" "No, Miss Stewart. But there's something I'd
like to do for
you. I'm one of your faithful readers, you know, and I
think the
Tribune is a truly fine paper. I just realized that we
haven't been
doing any advertising in it, and I want to correct that.
I'm involved
in several large companies, and they do a lot of

advertising. I mean a
lot of advertising. I think that a good portion of that should go to a
fine paper like the Tribune." "I'm delighted to hear that, Senator.
We can always use more advertising. Whom shall I have my advertising
manager talk to?" "Well, before he talks to anyone, I think you and I
should settle a little problem between us." "What's that?" Leslie
asked. "It concerns President Russell." "Yes?" "This is a rather
delicate matter, Miss Stewart. You said a few moments ago that you
owed everything you have to me. Now I'm asking you to do me a little
favor." "I'll be happy to, if I can." "In my own small way, I helped
the president get elected to office." "I know."

"And he's doing a fine job. Of course, it makes it more difficult for
him when he's attacked by a powerful newspaper like the Tribune every
time he turns around."

"What are you asking me to do, Senator?"

"Well, I would greatly appreciate it if those attacks would stop."

"And in exchange for that, I can count on getting advertising from some
of your companies."

"A great deal of advertising, Miss Stewart."

"Thank you, Senator. Why don't you call me back when you have
something more to offer?"

And the line went dead.

In his office at the Washington Tribune, Matt Baker was reading the
story about President Russell's secret love nest. "Who the hell
authorized this?" he snapped at his assistant. "It came from the
White Tower." "Goddammit. She's not running this paper, I am." Why
the hell do I put up with her? he wondered, not for the first time.
Three hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year plus bonuses and stock
options, he told himself wryly. Every time he was ready to quit, she
seduced him with more money and more power. Besides, he had to admit
to himself that it was fascinating working for one of the most powerful
women in the world. There were things about her that he would never
understand.

When she had first bought the Tribune, Leslie had said to Matt,
"There's an astrologer I want you to hire. His name is Zoltaire."

"He's syndicated by our competition."

"I don't care. Hire him."

Later that day, Matt Baker told her, "I checked on Zoltaire. It would
be too expensive to buy out his contract."

"Buy it."

The following week, Zoltaire, whose real name Matt learned was David
Hayworth, came to work for the Washington Tribune. He was in his
fifties, small and dark and intense.

Matt was puzzled. Leslie did not seem like the kind of

woman who would
have any interest in astrology. As far as he could see, there was no
contact between Leslie and David Hay-worth.

What he did not know was that Hayworth went to visit Leslie at her home
whenever she had an important decision to make.

On the first day, Matt had had Leslie's name put on the masthead:
"Leslie Chambers, Publisher." She had glanced at it and said, "Change
it. It's Leslie Stewart." The lady is on an ego trip, Matt had
thought. But he was wrong. Leslie had decided to revert to her maiden
name because she wanted Oliver Russell to know exactly who was
responsible for what was going to happen to him.

The day after Leslie took over the newspaper, she said, "We're going to
buy a health magazine." Matt looked at her curiously. "Why?"
"Because the health field is exploding." She had proved to be right.
The magazine was an instant success. "We're going to start expanding,"
Leslie told Baker. "Let's get some people looking for publications
overseas." "All right." "And there's too much fat around here. Get
rid of the reporters who aren't pulling their weight." "Leslie " "I
want young reporters who are hungry." When an executive position
became open, Leslie insisted on being there for the interview. She
would listen to the applicant, and then would ask one question: "What's
your golf score?" The job would often depend on the answer. "What the
hell kind of question is that?" Matt Baker asked the

first time he
heard it. "What difference does a golf score make?" "I don't want
people here who are dedicated to golf. If they work here, they're
going to be dedicated to the Washington Tribune."

Leslie Stewart's private life was a subject of endless discussions at
the Tribune. She was a beautiful woman, unattached, and as far as
anyone knew, she was not involved with any man and had no personal
life. She was one of the capital's preeminent hostesses, and important
people vied for an invitation to her dinner parties. But people
speculated about what she did when all the guests had left and she was
alone. There were rumors that she was an insomniac who spent the
nights working, planning new projects for the Stewart empire.

There were other rumors, more titillating, but there was no way of
proving them.

Leslie involved herself in everything: editorials, news stories,
advertising. One day, she said to the head of the advertising
department, "Why aren't we getting any ads from Glea-son's?" an
upscale store in Georgetown.

"I've tried, but "

"I know the owner. I'll give him a call."

She called him and said, "Allan, you're not giving the Tribune any ads.
Why?"

He had laughed and said, "Leslie, your readers are our shoplifters."

Before Leslie went into a conference, she read up on everyone who would
be there. She knew everyone's weaknesses and strengths, and she was a
tough negotiator.

"Sometimes you can be too tough," Matt Baker warned her. "You have to
leave them something, Leslie."

"Forget it. I believe in the scorched-earth policy."

In the course of the next year, Washington Tribune Enterprises acquired
a newspaper and radio station in Australia, a television station in
Denver, and a newspaper in Hammond, Indiana. Whenever there was a new
acquisition, its employees were terrified of what was coming. Leslie's
reputation for being ruthless was growing.

Leslie Stewart was intensely jealous of Katharine Graham.

"She's just lucky," Leslie said. "And she has the reputation of being
a bitch."

Matt Baker was tempted to ask Leslie what she thought her own
reputation was, but he decided not to.

One morning when Leslie arrived at her office, she found that someone
had placed a small wooden block with two brass balls on her desk.

Matt Baker was upset. "I'm sorry," he said. "I'll take "

"No. Leave it."

"But "

"Leave it."

Matt Baker was having a conference in his office when Leslie's voice
came on over the intercom. "Matt, come up here."

No "please," no "good morning." Jt's going to be a bad-hair day, Matt
Baker thought grimly. The Ice Princess was in one of her moods.
"That's it for now," Matt said. He left his office and walked through
the corridors, where hundreds of employees were busily at work. He
took the elevator up to the White Tower and entered the sumptuous
publisher's office. Half a dozen editors were already gathered in the
room. Behind an enormous desk sat Leslie Stewart. She looked up as
Matt Baker entered. "Let's get started." She had called an editorial
meeting. Matt Baker remembered her saying, "You'll be running the
newspaper. I'll keep my hands off." He should have known better. She
had no business calling meetings like this. That was his job. On the
other hand, she was the publisher and owner of the Washington Tribune,
and she could damn well do anything she pleased. Matt Baker said, "I
want to talk to you about the story about President Russell's love nest
in Virginia." "There's nothing to talk about," Leslie said. She held
up a copy of The Washington Post, their rival. "Have you seen this?"
Matt had seen it. "Yes, it's just " "In the old days it was called a
scoop, Matt. Where were you and your reporters when the Post was

getting the news?" The headline in The Washington Post read: SECOND

LOBBYIST TO BE INDICTED FOR GIVING ILLEGAL GIFTS TO SECRETARY OF

DEFENSE.

"Why didn't we get that story?" "Because it isn't official yet. I
checked on it. It's just " "I don't like being scooped." Matt Baker
sighed and sat back in his chair. It was going to be a stormy session.
"We're number one, or we're nothing," Leslie Stewart announced to the
group. "And if we're nothing, there won't be any jobs here for anyone,
will there?" Leslie turned to Arnie Cohn, the editor of the Sunday
magazine section. "When people wake up Sunday morning, we want them to
read the magazine section. We don't want to put our readers back to
sleep. The stories we ran last Sunday were boring." He was thinking,
If you were a man, I'd "Sorry," he mumbled. "I'll try to do better
next time." Leslie turned to Jeff Connors, the sports editor. Connors
was a good-looking man in his mid-thirties, tall, with an athletic
build, blond hair, intelligent gray eyes. He had the easy manner of
someone who knew that he was good at what he did. Matt had heard that
Leslie had made a play for him, and he had turned her down. "You wrote
that Fielding was going to be traded to the Pirates." "I was told "

"You were told wrong! The Tribune is guilty of printing a story that
never happened." "I got it from his manager," Jeff

Connors said,
unperturbed. "He told me that " "Next time check out your stories, and
then check them out again." Leslie turned and pointed to a framed,
yellowed newspaper article hanging on the wall. It was the front page
of the Chicago Tribune, dated November 3,1948. The banner headline
read: DEWEY DEFEATS TRUMAN. "The worst thing a newspaper can do,"
Leslie said, "is to get the facts wrong. We're in a business where you
always have to get it right." She glanced at her watch. "That's it
for now. I'll expect you all to do a lot better." As they rose to
leave, Leslie said to Matt Baker, "I want you to stay." "Right." He
sank back into his chair and watched the others depart. "Was I rough
on them?" she asked. "You got what you wanted. They're all suicidal."
"We're not here to make friends, we're here to put out a newspaper."
She looked up again at the framed front page on the wall. "Can you
imagine what the publisher of that paper must have felt after that
story hit the streets and Truman was president? I never want to have
that feeling, Matt. Never." "Speaking of getting it wrong," Matt
said, "that story on page one about President Russell was more suitable
for a cheap tabloid publication. Why do you keep riding him? Give him
a chance."

Leslie said enigmatically, "I gave him his chance." She stood up and
began to pace. "I got a tip that Russell is going to veto the new
communications bill. That means we'll have to call off

the deal for
the San Diego station and the Omaha station."

"There's nothing we can do about that."

"Oh, yes, there is. I want him out of office, Matt.
We'll help put
someone else in the White House, someone who knows what
he's doing."

Matt had no intention of getting into another argument
with Leslie
Stewart about the president. She was fanatic on the
subject.

"He's not fit to be in that office, and I'm going to do
everything I
can to make sure that he's defeated in the next election."

Philip Cole, chief of correspondents for WTE, hurried into
Matt Baker's
office as Matt was ready to leave. There was a worried
expression on
his face. "We have a problem, Matt." "Can it wait until
tomorrow?
I'm late for a " "It's about Dana Evans." Matt said
sharply, "What
about her?" "She's been arrested."

"Arrested?" Matt asked incredulously. "What for?"
"Espionage. Do
you want me to ?" "No. I'll handle this." Matt Baker
hurried back to
his desk and dialed the State Department. Fifteen.

She was being dragged, naked, out of her cell into a cold,
dark
courtyard. She struggled wildly against the two men
holding her, but
she was no match for them. There were six soldiers with
rifles
outside, waiting for her as she was carried, screaming, to
a wooden
post hammered into the ground. Colonel Gordan Divjak

watched his men
tie her to the post. "You can't do this to me! I'm not a spy!" she
yelled. But she could not make her voice heard above the sounds of
mortar fire in the near distance. Colonel Divjak stepped away from her
and nodded toward the firing squad. "Ready, aim " "Stop that
screaming!" Rough hands were shaking her. Dana opened her eyes, her
heart pounding. She was lying on the cot in her small, dark cell.
Colonel Divjak was standing over her.

Dana sat up, panicky, trying to blink away the nightmare. "What what
are you going to do to me?"

Colonel Divjak said coldly, "If there were justice, you would be shot.
Unfortunately, I have been given orders to release you."

Dana's heart skipped a beat.

"You will be put on the first plane out of here." Colonel Divjak
looked into her eyes and said, "Don't ever come back."

It had taken all the pressure that the State Department and the
president could muster to get Dana Evans released. When Peter Tager
heard about the arrest, he had gone in to see the president. "I just
got a call from the State Department. Dana Evans has been arrested on
charges of espionage. They're threatening to execute her." "Jesus!
That's terrible. We can't let that happen." "Right. I'd like
permission to use your name." "You've got it. Do whatever has to be
done." "I'll work with the State Department. If we can

pull this off,
maybe the Tribune will go a little easier on you." Oliver shook his
head. "I wouldn't count on it. Let's just get her the hell out of
there."

Dozens of frantic telephone calls later, with pressure from the Oval
Office, the secretary of state, and the secretary-general of the United
Nations, Dana's captors reluctantly agreed to release her.

When the news came, Peter Tager hurried in to tell Oliver. "She's
free. She's on her way home."

"Great."

He thought about Dana Evans on his way to a meeting that morning. I'm
glad we were able to save her.

He had no idea that that action was going to cost him his life.

When Dana's plane landed at Dulles International Airport, Mart Baker
and two dozen reporters from newspapers and television and radio
stations were waiting to greet her. Dana looked at the crowd in
disbelief. "What's ?" "This way, Dana. Smile!" "How were you
treated? Was there any brutality?" "How does it feel to be back home?"
"Let's have a picture." "Do you have any plans to go back?" They
were all talking at once. Dana stood there, overwhelmed. Matt Baker
hustled Dana into a waiting limousine, and they sped away.

"What's what's going on?" Dana asked.

"You're a celebrity."

She shook her head. "I don't need this, Matt." She
closed her eyes
for a moment. "Thanks for getting me out."

"You can thank the president and Peter Tager. They pushed
all the
buttons. You also have Leslie Stewart to thank."

When Matt told Leslie the news, she had said, "Those
bastards! They
can't do that to the Tribune. I want you to see that they
free her.
Pull every string you can and get her out of there."

Dana looked out the window of the limousine. People were
walking along
the street, talking and laughing. There was no sound of
gunfire or
mortar shells. It was eerie.

"Our real estate editor found an apartment for you. I'm
taking you
there now. I want you to have some time off as much as
you like. When
you're ready, we'll put you back to work." He took a
closer look at
Dana. "Are you feeling all right? If you want to see a
doctor, I'll
arrange "

"I'm fine. Our bureau took me to a doctor in Paris."

The apartment was on Calvert Street, an attractively
furnished place
with one bedroom, living room, kitchen, bath, and small
study.

"Will this do?" Matt asked.

"This is perfect. Thank you, Matt."

"I've had the refrigerator stocked for you. You'll

probably

OTA

want to go shopping for clothes tomorrow, after you get some rest.
Charge everything to the paper."

"Thanks, Matt. Thank you for everything."

"You're going to be debriefed later. I'll set it up for you."

She was on a bridge, listening to the gunfire and watching bloated
bodies float by, and she woke up, sobbing. It had been so real. It
was a dream, but it was happening. At that moment, innocent victims
men, women, and children were being senselessly and brutally
slaughtered. She thought of Professor Staka's words. "This war in
Bosnia and Herzegovina is beyond understanding." What was incredible
to her was that the rest of the world didn't seem to care. She was
afraid to go back to sleep, afraid of the nightmares that filled her
brain. She got up and walked over to the window and looked out at the
city. It was quiet no guns, no people running down the street,
screaming. It seemed unnatural. She wondered how Kemal was, and
whether she would ever see him again. He's probably forgotten me by
now.

Dana spent part of the morning shopping for clothes. Wherever she
went, people stopped to stare at her. She heard whispers: "That's Dana
Evans!" The sales clerks all recognized her. She was

famous. She
hated it.

Dana had had no breakfast and no lunch. She was hungry, but she was
unable to eat. She was too tense. It was as though she were waiting
for some disaster to strike. When she walked down the street, she
avoided the eyes of strangers. She was suspicious of everyone. She
kept listening for the sound of gunfire. I can't go on like this, Dana
thought.

At noon, she walked into Matt Baker's office.

"What are you doing here? You're supposed to be on vacation."

"I need to go back to work, Matt."

He looked at her and thought about the young girl who had come to him a
few years earlier. "I'm here for a job. Of course, I already have a
job here. It's more like a transfer, isn't it? ... I can start right
away...." And she had more than fulfilled her promise. If I ever had
a daughter... "Your boss wants to meet you," Matt told Dana.

They headed for Leslie Stewart's office.

The two women stood there appraising each other. "Welcome back,
Dana."

"Thank you."

"Sit down." Dana and Matt took chairs opposite Leslie's desk.

"I want to thank you for getting me out of there," Dana said.

"It must have been hell. I'm sorry." Leslie looked at Matt. "What
are we going to do with her now, Matt?"

He looked at Dana. "We're about to reassign our White House
correspondent. Would you like the job?" It was one of the most
prestigious television assignments in the country.

Dana's face lit up. "Yes. I would."

Leslie nodded. "You've got it."

Dana rose. "Well thank you, again."

"Good luck."

Dana and Matt left the office. "Let's get you settled," Matt said. He
walked her over to the television building, where the whole staff was
waiting to greet her. It took Dana fifteen minutes to work her way
through the crowd of well-wishers.

"Meet your new White House correspondent," Matt said to Philip Cole.

"That's great. I'll show you to your office."

"Have you had lunch yet?" Matt asked Dana.

"No, I "

"Why don't we get a bite to eat?"

The executive dining room was on the fifth floor, a spacious, airy room
with two dozen tables. Matt led Dana to a table in the corner, and

they sat down. "Miss Stewart seemed very nice," Dana said. Matt
started to say something. "Yeah. Let's order." "I'm not hungry."
"You haven't had lunch?" "No."

"Did you have breakfast?"

"No."

"Dana when did you eat last?"

She shook her head. "I don't remember. It's not important."

"Wrong. I can't have our new White House correspondent starving
herself to death."

The waiter came over to the table. "Are you ready to order, Mr.
Baker?"

"Yes." He scanned the menu. "We'll start you off light. Miss Evans
will have a bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwich." He looked over at
Dana. "Pastry or ice cream?"

"Noth "

"Pie a la mode. And I'll have a roast beef sandwich."

"Yes, sir."

Dana looked around. "All this seems so unreal. Life is what's
happening over there, Matt. It's horrible. No one here cares."

"Don't say that. Of course we care. But we can't run the world, and
we can't control it. We do the best we can."

"It's not good enough," Dana said fiercely.

"Dana..." He stopped. She was far away, listening to distant sounds
that he could not hear, seeing grisly sights that he could not see.
They sat in silence until the waiter arrived with their food.

"Here we are."

"Mart, I'm not really hung "

O '1 A

"You're going to eat," Matt commanded. Jeff Connors was making his way
over to the table. "Hi, Matt." "Jeff." Jeff Connors looked at Dana.
"Hello." Mart said, "Dana, this is Jeff Connors. He's the Tribune's
sports editor." Dana nodded. "I'm a big fan of yours, Miss Evans.
I'm glad you got out safely." Dana nodded again. Matt said, "Would
you like to join us, Jeff?" "Love to." He took a chair and said to
Dana, "I tried never to miss any of your broadcasts. I thought they
were brilliant." Dana mumbled, "Thank you." "Jeff here is one of our
great athletes. He's in the Baseball Hall of Fame." Another small
nod. "If you happen to be free," Jeff said, "on Friday, the Orioles
are playing the Yankees in Baltimore. It's " Dana turned to look at
him for the first time. "That sounds really exciting. The object of
the game is to hit the ball and then run around the field while the
other side tries to stop you?" He looked at her warily. "Well " Dana
got to her feet, her voice trembling. "I've seen people

running around
a field but they were running for their lives because someone was
shooting at them and killing them!" She was near hysteria. "It wasn't
a game, and it it wasn't about a stupid baseball."

The other people in the room were turning to stare at her.

"You can go to hell," Dana sobbed. And she fled from the room.

Jeff turned to Matt. "I'm terribly sorry. I didn't mean to "

"It wasn't your fault. She hasn't come home yet. And God knows she's
entitled to a bad case of nerves."

Dana hurried into her office and slammed the door. She went to her
desk and sat down, fighting hysteria. Oh, Cod. I've made a complete
fool of myself. They'll fire me, and I deserve it. Why did I attack
that man? How could I have done anything so awful? I don't belong
here. I don't belong anywhere anymore. She sat there with her head on
the desk, sobbing. A few minutes later, the door opened and someone
came in. Dana looked up. It was Jeff Connors, carrying a tray with a
bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwich and a slice of pie a la mode. "You
forgot your lunch," Jeff said mildly. Dana wiped away her tears,
mortified. "I I want to apologize. I'm so sorry. I had no right to "
"You had every right," he said quietly. "Anyway, who needs to watch a
dumb old baseball game?" Jeff put the tray on the desk. "May I join
you for lunch?" He sat down. "I'm not hungry. Thank

you."

He sighed. "You're putting me in a very difficult position, Miss
Evans. Mart says you have to eat. You don't want to get me fired, do
you?"

Dana managed a smile. "No." She picked up half of the sandwich and
took a small bite.

"Bigger."

Dana took another small bite.

"Bigger."

She looked up at him. "You're really going to make me eat this, aren't
you?"

"You bet I am." He watched her take a larger bite of the sandwich.
"That's better. By the way, if you're not doing anything Friday night,
I don't know if I mentioned it, but there's a game between the Orioles
and the Yankees. Would you like to go?"

She looked at him and nodded. "Yes."

At three o'clock that afternoon, when Dana walked into the White House
entrance, the guard said, "Mr. Tager would like to see you, Miss
Evans. I'll have someone take you to his office." A few minutes
later, one of the guides led Dana down a long corridor to Peter Tager's
office. He was waiting for her. "Mr. Tager ..." "I didn't expect to
see you so soon, Miss Evans. Won't your station give you any time

off?" "I didn't want any," Dana said. "I I need to work."

"Please sit down." She sat across from him. "Can I offer you
anything?" "No, thanks. I just had lunch." She smiled to herself at
the recollection of Jeff Connors. "Mr. Tager, I want to thank you and
President Russell so much for rescuing me." She hesitated. "I know
the Tribune hasn't been too kind to the president, and I " Peter Tager
raised a hand. "This was something above politics. There was no
chance that the president was going to let them get away with this. You
know the story of Helen of Troy?" "Yes." He smiled. "Well, we might
have started a war over you. You're a very important person." "I
don't feel very important." "I want you to know how pleased both the
president and I are that you've been assigned to cover the White
House." "Thank you." He paused for a moment. "It's unfortunate that
the Tribune doesn't like President Russell, and there's nothing you can
do about it. But in spite of that, on a very personal level, if
there's anything the president or I can do to help ... we both have an
enormous regard for you." "Thank you. I appreciate that." The door
opened and Oliver walked in. Dana and Peter Tager stood up. "Sit
down," Oliver said. He walked over to Dana. "Welcome home."

"Thank you, Mr. President," Dana said. "And I do mean thank you."

Oliver smiled. "If you can't save someone's life, what's

the point of
being president? I want to be frank with you, Miss Evans.
None of us
here is a fan of your newspaper. All of us are your
fans."

"Thank you."

"Peter is going to give you a tour of the White House. If
you have any
problems, we're here to help you."

"You're very kind."

"If you don't mind, I want you to meet with Mr. Werner,
the secretary
of state. I'd like to have him get a firsthand briefing
from you on
the situation in Herzegovina."

"I'd be happy to do that," Dana said.

There were a dozen men seated in the secretary of state's
private
conference room, listening to Dana describe her
experiences. "Most of
the buildings in Sarajevo have been damaged or
destroyed.... There's no
electricity, and the people there who still have cars
unhook the car
batteries at night to run their television sets.... "The
streets of the
city are obstructed by the wreckage of bombed automobiles,
carts, and
bicycles. The main form of transportation is walking....
"When there's
a storm, people catch the water from the street gutters
and put it into
buckets.... "There's no respect for the Red Cross or for
the
journalists there. More than forty correspondents have
been killed
covering the Bosnian war, and dozens have been wounded....
Whether the

present revolt against Slobodan Milosevic is successful or not, the
feeling is that because of the popular uprising, his regime has been
badly damaged...."

The meeting went on for two hours. For Dana it was both traumatic and
cathartic, because as she described what happened, she found herself
living the terrible scenes all over again; and at the same time, she
found it a. relief to be able to talk about it. When she was finished,
she felt drained.

The secretary of state said, "I want to thank you, Miss Evans. This
has been very informative." He smiled. "I'm glad you got back here
safely."

"So am I, Mr. Secretary."

Friday night, Dana was seated next to Jeff Connors in the press box at
Camden Yards, watching the baseball game. And for the first time since
she had returned, she was able to think about something other than the
war. As Dana watched the players on the field, she listened to the
announcer reporting the game. "... it's the top of the sixth inning
and Nelson is pitching. Alomar hits a line drive down the left-field
line for a double. Palmeiro is approaching the plate. The count is
two and one. Nelson throws a fastball down the middle and Palmeiro is
going for it. What a hit! It looks like it's going to clear the right

field wall. It's over! Palmeiro is rounding the bases with a two-run
homer that puts the Orioles in the lead...."

At the seventh-inning stretch, Jeff stood up and looked at Dana. "Are
you enjoying yourself?"

Dana looked at him and nodded. "Yes."

Back in D.C. after the game, they had supper at Bistro Twenty
Fifteen.

"I want to apologize again for the way I behaved the other day," Dana
said. "It's just that I've been living in a world where " She stopped,
not sure how to phrase it. "Where everything is a matter of life and
death. Everything. It's awful. Because unless someone stops the war,
those people have no hope."

Jeff said gently, "Dana, you can't put your life on hold because of
what's happening over there. You have to begin living again. Here."

"I know. It's just... not easy."

"Of course it isn't. I'd like to help you. Would you let me?"

Dana looked at him for a long time. "Please."

The next day, Dana had a luncheon date with Jeff Connors. "Can you
pick me up?" he asked. He gave her the address. "Right." Dana
wondered what Jeff was doing there. It was in a very troubled
inner-city neighborhood. When Dana arrived, she found the answer.

Jeff was surrounded by two teams of baseball players, ranging in age
from nine to thirteen, dressed in a creative variety of baseball
uniforms. Dana parked at the curb to watch.

"And remember," Jeff was saying, "don't rush. When the pitcher throws
the ball, imagine that it's coming at you very slowly, so that you have
plenty of time to hit it. Feel your bat smacking the ball. Let your
mind help guide your hands so "

Jeff looked over and saw Dana. He waved. "All right, fellows. That's
it for now."

One of the boys asked, "Is that your girl, Jeff?"

"Only if I'm lucky." Jeff smiled. "See you later." He walked over to
Dana's car.

"That's quite a ball club," Dana said.

"They're good boys. I coach them once a week."

She smiled. "I like that." And she wondered how Kemal was and what he
was doing.

As the days went on, Dana found herself coming to like Jeff Connors
more and more. He was sensitive, intelligent, and amusing. She
enjoyed being with him. Slowly, the horrible memories of Sarajevo were
beginning to fade. The morning came when she woke up without having
had nightmares. When she told Jeff about it, he took her hand and
said, "That's my girl."

And Dana wondered whether she should read a deeper meaning into it.

There was a hand-printed letter waiting for Dana at the office. It
read: "miss evans, don't worry about me. i'm happy, i am not lonely, i
don't miss anybody, and i am going to send you back the clothes you
bought me because i don't need them, i have my own clothes, goodbye."
It was signed "kemal." The letter was postmarked Paris, and the
letterhead read "Xavier's Home for Boys." Dana read the letter twice
and then picked up the phone. It took her four hours to reach Kemal.
She heard his voice, a tentative "Hello ..." "Kemal, this is Dana
Evans." There was no response. "I got your letter." Silence. "I
just wanted to tell you that I'm glad you're so happy, and that you're
having such a good time." She waited a moment, then went on, "I wish I
were as happy as you are. Do you know why I'm not? Because I miss
you. I think about you a lot." "No, you don't," Kemal said. "You
don't care about me." "You're wrong. How would you like to come to
Washington and live with me?" There was a long silence. "Do you do
you mean that?" "You bet I do. Would you like that?" "I " He began
to cry. "Would you, Kemal?" "Yes yes, ma'am." "I'll make the
arrangements."

"Miss Evans?"

"Yes?"

"I love you."

Dana and Jeff Connors were walking in West Potomac Park. "I think I'm
going to have a roommate," Dana said. "He should be here in the next
few weeks." Jeff looked at her in surprise. "He?" Dana found herself
pleased at his reaction. "Yes. His name is Kemal. He's twelve years
old." She told him the story. "He sounds like a great kid." "He is.
He's been through hell, Jeff. I want to help him forget." He looked
at Dana and said, "I'd like to help, too." That night they made love
for the first time.

Sixteen.

There are two Washington, D.C."s. One is a city of inordinate beauty:
imposing architecture, world-class museums, statues, monuments to the
giants of the past: Lincoln, Jefferson, Washington... a city of verdant
parks, cherry blossoms, and velvet air.

The other Washington, D.C." is a citadel of the homeless, a city with
one of the highest crime rates in the nation, a labyrinth of muggings
and murders.

The Monroe Arms is an elegant boutique hotel discreetly tucked away not
far from the corner of ayth and K streets. It does no advertising and
caters mainly to its regular clientele.

The hotel was built a number of years ago by an enterprising young real
estate entrepreneur named Lara Cameron. Jeremy Robinson, the hotel's

general manager, had just arrived on his evening shift and was studying
the guest register with a perplexed expression on his face. He checked
the names of the occupants of the elite Terrace Suites once again to
make certain someone had not made a mistake. In Suite 325, a faded
actress was rehearsing for a play opening at the National Theater.
According to a story in The Washington Post, she was hoping to make a
comeback. In 425, the suite above hers, was a well-known arms dealer
who visited Washington regularly. The name on the guest register was
J. L. Smith, but his looks suggested one of the Middle East countries.
Mr. Smith was an extraordinarily generous tipper. Suite 525 was
registered to William Quint, a congressman who headed the powerful drug
oversight committee. Above, Suite 625 was occupied by a computer
software salesman who visited Washington once a month. Registered in
Suite 725 was Pat Murphy, an international lobbyist. So far, so good,
Jeremy Robinson thought. The guests were all well known to him. It
was Suite 825, the Imperial Suite on the top floor, that was the
enigma. It was the most elegant suite in the hotel, and it was always
held in reserve for the most important VIPs. It occupied the entire
floor and was exquisitely decorated with valuable paintings and
antiques. It had its own private elevator leading to the basement
garage, so that its guests who wished to be anonymous could arrive and
depart in privacy.

What puzzled Jeremy Robinson was the name on the hotel register: Eugene
Gant. Was there actually a person by that name, or had someone who
enjoyed reading Thomas Wolfe selected it as an alias?

Carl Gorman, the day clerk who had registered the eponymous Mr. Gant,
had left on his vacation a few hours earlier, and was unreachable.
Robinson hated mysteries. Who was Eugene Gant and why had he been
given the Imperial Suite?

In Suite 325, on the third floor, Dame Gisella Barrett was rehearsing
for a play. She was a distinguished-looking woman in her late sixties,
an actress who had once mesmerized audiences and critics from London's
West End to Manhattan's Broadway. There were still faint traces of
beauty in her face, but they were overlaid with bitterness. She had
read the article in The Washington Post that said she had come to
Washington to make a comeback. A comeback! Dame Barrett thought
indignantly. How dare they! I've never been away. True, it had been
more than twenty years since she had last appeared onstage, but that
was only because a great actress needed a great part, a brilliant
director, and an understanding producer. The directors today were too
young to cope with the grandeur of real Theater, and the great English
producers H. M. Tenant, Binkie Beaumont, C. B. Cochran were all gone.
Even the reasonably competent American producers, Helburn, Belasco, and
Golden, were no longer around. There was no question about it: The

current theater was controlled by know-nothing parvenus with no
background. The old days had been so wonderful. There were
playwrights back then whose pens were dipped in lightning. Dame
Barrett had starred in the part of Ellie Dunn in Shaw's Heartbreak
House. How the critics raved about me. Poor George. He hated to be
called George. He preferred Bernard. People thought of him as acerbic
and bitter, but underneath it all, he was really a romantic Irishman.
He used to send me red roses. I think he was too shy to go beyond
that. Perhaps he was afraid I would reject him. She was about to make
her return in one of the most powerful roles ever written Lady Macbeth.
It was the perfect choice for her. Dame Barrett placed a chair in
front of a blank wall, so that she would not be distracted by the view
outside. She sat down, took a deep breath, and began to get into the
character Shakespeare had created. "Come, you spirits That tend on
mortal thoughts! Unsex me here, And fill me from the crown to the toe
top-full Of direst cruelty; make thick my blood, Stop up the access and
passage to remorse, That no compunctious visitings of nature Shake my
fell purpose, nor keep the peace between The effect and it!"

".. . For God's sake, how can they be so stupid? After all the years
I have been staying in this hotel, you would think that..."

The voice was booming through the open window, from the suite above.

In Suite 425, J. L. Smith, the arms dealer, was loudly berating a
waiter from room service. "... they would know by now that I order
only Beluga caviar. Beluga!" He pointed to a plate of caviar on the
room-service table. "That is a dish fit for peasants!"

"I'm so sorry, Mr. Smith. I'll go down to the kitchen and "

"Never mind." J. L. Smith looked at his diamond-studded Rolex. "I
have no time. I have an important appointment." He rose and started
toward the door. He was due at his attorney's office. A day earlier,
a federal grand jury had indicted him on fifteen counts of giving
illegal gifts to the secretary of defense. If found guilty, he was
facing three years in prison and a million-dollar fine.

In Suite 525, Congressman William Quint, a member of a prominent
third-generation Washington family, was in conference with three
members of his investigating staff. "The drug problem in this city is
getting completely out of hand," Quint said. "We have to get it back
under control He turned to Dalton Isaak. "What's your take on it?"

"It's the street gangs. The Brentwood Crew is undercutting the
Fourteenth Street Crew and the Simple City Crew. That's led to four
killings in the last month."

"We can't let this go on," Quint said. "It's bad for business. I've
been getting calls from the DEA and the chief of police

asking what
we're planning to do about it."

"What did you tell them?"

"The usual. That we're investigating." He turned to his assistant.
"Set up a meeting with the Brentwood Crew. Tell them if they want
protection from us, they're going to have to get their prices in line
with the others." He turned to another of his assistants. "How much
did we take in last month?"

"Ten million here, ten million offshore."

"Let's bump that up. This city is getting too damned expensive."

In 625, the suite above, Norman Haff lay naked in the dark in bed,
watching a porno film on the hotel's closed-circuit channel. He was a
pale-skinned man with an enormous beer belly and a flabby body. He
reached over and stroked the breast of his bed mate. "Look what
they're doing, Irma." His voice was a strangled whisper. "Would you
like me to do that to you?" He circled his fingers around her belly,
his eyes fastened to the screen where a woman was making passionate
love to a man. "Does that excite you, baby? It sure gets me hot."

He slipped two fingers between Irma's legs. "I'm ready," he groaned.
He grabbed the inflated doll, rolled over, and pushed himself into her.
The vagina of the battery-operated doll opened and closed on him,
squeezing him tighter and tighter.

"Oh, my God!" he exclaimed. He gave a satisfied groan.
"Yes! Yes!"

He switched off the battery and lay there panting. He felt wonderful.
He would use Irma again in the morning before he deflated her and put
her in a suitcase.

Norman was a salesman, and he was on the road most of the time in
strange towns where he had no companionship. He had discovered Irma
years ago, and she was all the female company he needed. His stupid
salesmen friends traveled around the country picking up sluts and
professional whores, but Norman had the last laugh.

Irma would never give him a disease.

On the floor above, in Suite 725, Pat Murphy's family had just come
back from dinner. Tim Murphy, twelve, was standing on the balcony
overlooking the park. "Tomorrow can we climb up to the top of the
monument, Daddy?" he begged. "Please?" His younger brother said,
"No. I want to go to the Smithsonian Institute." "Institution," his
father corrected him.

"Whatever. I want to go." It was the first time the children had been
in the nation's capital, although their father spent more than half of
every year there. Pat Murphy was a successful lobbyist and had access
to some of the most important people in Washington. His father had
been the mayor of a small town in Ohio, and Pat had grown up fascinated

by politics. His best friend had been a boy named Joey. They had gone
through school together, had gone to the same summer camps, and had
shared everything. They were best friends in the truest sense of the
phrase. That had all changed one holiday when Joey's parents were away
and Joey was staying with the Murphys. In the middle of the night,
Joey had come to Pat's room and climbed into his bed. "Pat," he
whispered. "Wake up." Pat's eyes had flown open. "What? What's the
matter?" "I'm lonely," Joey whispered. "I need you." Pat Murphy was
confused. "What for?" "Don't you understand? I love you. I want
you." And he had kissed Pat on the lips. And the horrible realization
had dawned that Joey was a homosexual. Pat was sickened by it. He
refused ever to speak to Jney again. Pat Murphy loathed homosexuals.
They were freaks, faggots, fairies, cursed by God, trying to seduce
innocent children. He turned his hatred and disgust into a lifelong
campaign, voting for anti homosexual candidates and lecturing about the
evils and dangers of homosexuality. In the past, he had always come to
Washington alone, but this time his wife had stubbornly insisted that
he bring her and the children.

"We want to see what your life here is like," she said. And Pat had
finally given in.

He looked at his wife and children now and thought, It's one of the
last times I'll ever see them. How could I have ever made such a

stupid mistake? Well, it's almost over now. His family had such grand
plans for tomorrow. But there would be no tomorrow. In the morning,
before they were awake, he would be on his way to Brazil.

Alan was waiting for him.

In Suite 825, the Imperial Suite, there was total silence. Breathe, he
told himself. You must breathe ... slower, slower.... He was at the
edge of panic. He looked at the slim, naked body of the young girl on
the floor and thought, It wasn't my fault. She slipped. Her head had
split open where she had fallen against the sharp edge of the
wrought-iron table, and blood was oozing from her forehead. He had
felt her wrist. There was no pulse. It was incredible. One moment
she had been so alive, and the next moment... I've got to get out of
here. Now! He turned away from the body and hurriedly began to dress.
This would not be just another scandal. This would be a scandal that
rocked the world. They must never trace me to this suite. When he
finished dressing, he went into the bathroom, moistened a towel, and
began polishing the surfaces of every place he might have touched.

When he was finally sure he had left no fingerprints to mark his
presence, he took one last look around. Her purse! He picked up the
girl's purse from the couch, and walked to the far end of the
apartment, where the private elevator waited.

He stepped inside, trying hard to control his breathing.

He pressed G,
and a few seconds later, the elevator door opened and he was in the
garage. It was deserted. He started toward his car, then, suddenly
remembering, hurried back to the elevator. He took out his
handkerchief and wiped his fingerprints from the elevator buttons. He
stood in the shadows, looking around again to make sure he was still
alone. Finally satisfied, he walked over to his car, opened the door,
and sat behind the wheel. After a moment, he turned on the ignition
and drove out of the garage.

It was a Filipina maid who found the dead girl's body sprawled on the
floor. "O Dios ko, kawawa naman iyong babae!" She made the sign of
the cross and hurried out of the room, screaming for help. Three
minutes later, Jeremy Robinson and Thorn Peters, the hotel's head of
security, were in the Imperial Suite staring down at the naked body of
the girl. "Jesus," Thorn said. "She can't be more than sixteen or
seventeen years old." He turned to the manager. "We'd better call the
police."

"Wait!" Police. Newspapers. Publicity. For one wild moment,
Robinson wondered whether it would be possible to spirit the girl's
body out of the hotel. "I suppose so," he finally said reluctantly.

Thorn Peters took a handkerchief from his pocket and used it to pick up
the telephone.

"What are you doing?" Robinson demanded. "This isn't a crime scene.
It was an accident."

"We don't know that yet, do we?" Peters said.

He dialed a number and waited. "Homicide."

Detective Nick Reese looked like the paperback version of a
street-smart cop. He was tall and brawny, with a broken nose that was
a memento from an early boxing career. He had paid his dues by
starting as an officer in Washington's Metropolitan Police Department
and had slowly worked his way through the ranks: Master Patrol Officer,
Sergeant, Lieutenant. He had been promoted from Detective Da to
Detective Di, and in the past ten years had solved more cases than
anyone else in the department. Detective Reese stood there quietly
studying the scene. In the suite with him were half a dozen men. "Has
anyone touched her?" Robinson shuddered. "No." "Who is she?" "I
don't know."

Reese turned to look at the hotel manager. "A young girl is found dead
in your Imperial Suite, and you don't have any idea who she is? Doesn't
this hotel have a guest register?" "Of course, Detective, but in this
case " He hesitated. "In this case ... ?" "The suite is registered to
a Eugene Gant." "Who's Eugene Gant?" "I have no idea." Detective
Reese was getting impatient. "Look. If someone booked this suite, he
had to have paid for it... cash, credit card sheep whatever. Whoever

checked this Gant in must have gotten a look at him. Who checked him
in?" "Our day clerk, Gorman." "I want to talk to him." "I I'm afraid
that's impossible." "Oh? Why?" "He left on his vacation today."
"Call him." Robinson sighed. "He didn't say where he was going."
"When will he be back?" "In two weeks." "I'll let you in on a little
secret. I'm not planning to wait two weeks. I want some information
now. Somebody must have seen someone entering or leaving this suite."
"Not necessarily," Robinson said apologetically. "Besides the regular
exit, this suite has a private elevator that goes directly to the
basement garage.... I don't know what the fuss is all about. It it was
obviously an accident. She was probably on drugs and took an overdose
and tripped and fell." Another detective approached Detective Reese.
"I checked the closets. Her dress is from the Gap, shoes from the Wild
Pair. No help there." "There's nothing to identify her at all?" "No.
If she had a purse, it's gone." Detective Reese studied the body
again. He turned to a police officer standing there. "Get me some
soap. Wet it." The police officer was staring at him. "I'm sorry?"
"Wet soap." "Yes, sir." He hurried off. Detective Reese knelt down
beside the body of the girl and studied the ring on her finger. "It
looks like a school ring." A minute later, the police officer returned
and handed Reese a bar of wet soap. Reese gently rubbed the soap along
the girl's finger and carefully removed the ring. He turned it from

side to side, examining it. "It's a class ring from
Denver High.
There are initials on it, P.Y." He turned to his partner.
"Check it
out. Call the school and find out who she is. Let's get
an ID on her
as fast as we can." Detective Ed Nelson, one of the
fingerprint men,
came up to Detective Reese. "Something damned weird is
going on, Nick.
We're picking up prints all over the place, and yet
someone took the
trouble to wipe the fingerprints off all the doorknobs."
"So someone
was here with her when she died. Why didn't he call a
doctor? Why did
he bother wiping out his fingerprints? And what the hell
is a young
kid doing in an expensive suite like this?" He turned to
Robinson.
"How was this suite paid for?" "Our records show that it
was paid for
in cash. A messenger delivered the envelope. The
reservation was made
over the phone." The coroner spoke up. "Can we move the
body now,
Nick?" "Just hold it a minute. Did you find any marks of
violence?"
"Only the trauma to the forehead. But of course we'll do
an autopsy."
"Any track marks?" "No. Her arms and legs are clean."
"Does it look
like she's been raped?" "We'll have to check that out."
Detective
Reese sighed. "So what we have here is a schoolgirl from
Denver who
comes to Washington and gets herself killed in one of the
most
expensive hotels in the city. Someone wipes out his
fingerprints and
disappears. The whole thing stinks. I want to know who
rented this
suite." He turned to the coroner. "You can take her out
now." He

looked at Detective Nelson. "Did you check the
fingerprints in the
private elevator?" "Yes. The elevator goes from this
suite directly
to the basement. There are only two buttons. Both
buttons have been
wiped clean."

"You checked the garage?" "Right. Nothing unusual down
there."
"Whoever did this went to a hell of a lot of trouble to
cover his
tracks. He's either someone with a record, or a V.I.P
who's been
playing games out of school." He turned to Robinson.
"Who usually
rents this suite?" Robinson said reluctantly, "It's
reserved for our
most important guests. Kings, prime ministers ..." He
hesitated.
"... Presidents." "Have any telephone calls been placed
from this
phone in the last twenty-four hours?" "I don't know."
Detective Reese
was getting irritated. "But you would have a record if
there was?"
"Of course." Detective Reese picked up the telephone.
"Operator, this
is Detective Nick Reese. I want to know if any calls were
made from
the Imperial Suite within the last twenty-four hours....
I'll wait."
He watched as the white-coated coroner's men covered the
naked girl
with a sheet and placed her on a gurney. Jesus Christ,
Reese thought.
She hadn't even begun to live yet. He heard the
operator's voice.
"Detective Reese?" "Yes." "There was one call placed
from the suite
yesterday. It was a local call." Reese took out a
notepad and pencil.
"What was the number? ...
Four-five-six-seven-zero-four-one?..." Reese

started to write the numbers down, then suddenly stopped. He was
staring at the notepad. "Oh, shit!" "What's the matter?" Detective
Nelson asked. Reese looked up. "That's the number of the White
House."

Seventeen.

The next morning at breakfast, Jan asked, "Where were you last night,
Oliver?" Oliver's heart skipped a beat. But she could not possibly
have known what happened. No one could. No one. "I was meeting with
" Jan cut him short. "The meeting was called off. But you didn't get
home until three o'clock in the morning. I tried to reach you. Where
were you?" "Well, something came up. Why? Did you need ? Was
something wrong?" "It doesn't matter now," Jan said wearily. "Oliver,
you're not just hurting me, you're hurting yourself. You've come so
far. I don't want to see you lose it all because because you can't "
Her eyes filled with tears.

Oliver stood up and walked over to her. He put his arms around her.
"It's all right, Jan. Everything's fine. I love you very much."

And I do, Oliver thought, in my own way. What happened last night
wasn't my fault. She was the one who called. I never should have gone
to meet her. He had taken every possible precaution not to be seen.
I'm in the clear, Oliver decided.

Peter Tager was worried about Oliver. He had learned that

it was
impossible to control Oliver Russell's libido, and he had finally
worked out an arrangement with him. On certain nights, Peter Tager set
up fictitious meetings for the president to attend, away from the White
House, and arranged for the Secret Service escort to disappear for a
few hours.

When Peter Tager had gone to Senator Davis to complain about what was
happening, the senator had said calmly, "Well, after all, Oliver is a
very hot-blooded man, Peter. Sometimes it's impossible to control
passions like that. I deeply admire your morals, Peter. I know how
much your family means to you, and how distasteful the president's
behavior must seem to you. But let's not be too judgmental. You just
keep on seeing that everything is handled as discreetly as possible."

Detective Nick Reese hated going into the forbidding, white-walled
autopsy room. It smelled of formaldehyde and death.

When he walked in the door, the coroner, Helen Chuan, a petite,
attractive woman, was waiting for him. "Morning," Reese said. "Have
you finished with the autopsy?" "I have a preliminary report for you,
Nick. Jane Doe didn't die from her head injury. Her heart stopped
before she hit the table. She died of an overdose of
methylenedioxymethamphe-tami. He sighed. "Don't do this to me,
Helen." "Sorry. On the streets, it's called Ecstasy." She handed him
a coroner's report. "Here's what we have so far."

AUTOPSY PROTOCOL

NAME OF DECEDENT: JANE DOE FILE No: C-Ix6l

ANATOMIC SUMMARY

I. DILATED AND HYPERTROPHIC CARDIOMYOPATHY

A. CARDIOMEGALY (750 GM)

B. LEFT VENTRICULAR HYPERTROPHY, HEART

(2.3 CM)

C. CONGESTIVE HEPATOMEGALY (2750 GM

D. CONGESTIVE SPLENOMEGALY (350 MG>

II. ACUTE OPIATE INTOXICATION

A. ACUTE PASSIVE CONGESTION, ALL VISCERA

III. TOXICOLOGY (SEE SEPARATE REPORT)

IV. BRAIN HEMORRHAGE (SEE SEPARATE REPORT) CONCLUSION: (CAUSE OF

DEATH)

DILATED AND HYPERTROPHIC CARDIOMYOPATHY ACUTE OPIATE INTOXICATION

Nick Reese looked up. "So if you translated this into English, she
died of a drug overdose of Ecstasy?" "Yes." "Was she sexually
assaulted?" Helen Chuan hesitated. "Her hymen had been broken, and
there were traces of semen and a little blood along her thighs." "So
she was raped." "I don't think so." "What do you mean you don't think
so?" Reese frowned. "There were no signs of violence."

Detective
Reese was looking at her, puzzled. "What are you saying?"
"I think
that Jane Doe was a virgin. This was her first sexual
experience."
Detective Reese stood there, digesting the information.
Someone had
been able to persuade a virgin to go up to the Imperial
Suite and have
sex with him. It would have had to be someone she knew.
Or someone
famous or powerful. The telephone rang. Helen Chuan
picked it up.
"Coroner's office." She listened a moment, then handed
the phone to
the detective. "It's for you." Nick Reese took the
phone. "Reese."
His face brightened.

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Holbrook. Thanks for returning my call.
It's a class
ring from your school with the initials P.Y. on it. Do
you have a
female student with those initials?... I'd appreciate it.
Thank you.
I'll wait." He looked up at the coroner. "You're sure
she couldn't
have been raped?" "I found no signs of violence. None."
"Could she
have been penetrated after she died?" "I would say no."
Mrs.
Holbrook's voice came back on the phone. "Detective
Reese?" "Yes."
"According to our computer, we do have a female student
with the
initials P.Y. Her name is Pauline Young." "Could you
describe her for
me, Mrs. Holbrook?" "Why, yes. Pauline is eighteen.
She's short and
stocky, with dark hair...." "I see." Wrong girl. "And
that's the
only one?" "The only female, yes." He picked up on it.
"You mean you
have a male with those initials? "Yes. Paul Yerby. He's

a senior.
As a matter of fact, Paul happens to be in Washington, D.C." right
now." Detective Reese's heart began to beat faster. "He's here?"
"Yes. A class of students from Denver High is on a trip to Washington
to visit the White House and Congress and " "And they're all in the
city now?"

"That's right."

"Do you happen to know where they're staying?"

"At the Hotel Lombardy. They gave us a group rate there. I talked
with several of the other hotels, but they wouldn't "

"Thank you very much, Mrs. Holbrook. I appreciate it."

Nick Reese replaced the receiver and turned to the coroner. "Let me
know when the autopsy is complete, will you, Helen?"

"Of course. Good luck, Nick."

He nodded. "I think I've just had it."

The Hotel Lombardy is located on Pennsylvania Avenue, two blocks from
Washington Circle and within walking distance of the White House, some
monuments, and a subway station. Detective Reese walked into the
old-fashioned lobby and approached the clerk behind the desk. "Do you
have a Paul Yerby registered here?" "I'm sorry. We don't give out "
Reese flashed his badge. "I'm in a big hurry, friend."
"Yes, sir."
The clerk looked through his guest register. "There's a Mr. Yerby in
Room 315. Shall I ?" "No, I'll surprise him. Stay away

from the
phone." Reese took the elevator, got off on the third floor, and
walked down the corridor. He stopped before Room 315. He could hear
voices inside. He unfastened the button of his jacket and knocked on
the door. It was opened by a boy in his late teens.

"Hello." "Paul Yerby?" "No." The boy turned to someone in the room.
"Paul, someone for you." Nick Reese pushed his way into the room. A
slim, tousle-haired boy in jeans and a sweater was coming out of the
bathroom. "Paul Yerby?" "Yes. Who are you?" Reese pulled out his
badge. "Detective Nick Reese. Homicide." The boy's complexion turned
pale. "I what can I do for you?" Nick Reese could smell the fear. He
took the dead girl's ring from his pocket and held it out. "Have you
ever seen this ring before, Paul?" "No," Yerby said quickly. "I " "It
has your initials on it." "It has? Oh. Yeah." He hesitated. "I
guess it could be mine. I must have lost it somewhere." "Or given it
to someone?" The boy licked his lips, "Uh, yeah. I might have."
"Let's go downtown, Paul." The boy looked at him nervously. "Am I
under arrest?" "What for?" Detective Reese asked. "Have you
committed a crime?" "Of course not. I..." The words trailed off.

"Then why would I arrest you?"

"I I don't know. I don't know why you want me to go downtown."

He was eyeing the open door. Detective Reese reached out

and took a
grip on Paul's arm. "Let's go quietly."

The roommate said, "Do you want me to call your mother or anybody,
Paul?"

Paul Yerby shook his head, miserable. "No. Don't call anyone." His
voice was a whisper.

The Henry I. Daly Building at 300 Indiana Avenue, NW, in downtown
Washington is an unprepossessing six-story gray brick building that
serves as police headquarters for the district. The Homicide Branch
office is on the third floor. While Paul Yerby was being photographed
and fingerprinted, Detective Reese went to see Captain Otto Miller. "I
think we got a break in the Monroe Arms case." Miller leaned back in
his chair. "Go on." "I picked up the girl's boyfriend. The kid's
scared out of his wits. We're going to question him now. Do you want
to sit in?" Captain Miller nodded toward a pile of papers heaped on
his desk. "I'm busy for the next few months. Give me a report."
"Right." Detective Reese started toward the door. "Nick be sure to
read him his rights."

Paul Yerby was brought into an interrogation room. It was small, nine
by twelve, with a battered desk, four chairs, and a video camera. There
was a one-way mirror so that officers could watch the interrogation
from the next room.

Paul Yerby was facing Nick Reese and two other detectives,

Doug Hogan
and Edgar Bernstein. "You're aware that we're videotaping this
conversation?" Detective Reese "Yes, sir." "You have the right to an
attorney. If you cannot afford an attorney, one will be appointed to
represent you." "Would you like to have a lawyer present?" Detective
Bernstein "I don't need a lawyer." "All right. You have a right to
remain silent. If you waive that right, anything you say here can and
will be used against you in a court of law. Is that clear?" "Yes,
sir." "What's your legal name?" "Paul Yerby." "Your address?"
"Three-twenty Marion Street, Denver, Colorado. Look, I haven't done
anything wrong."

"No one says you have. We're just trying to get some information,
Paul. You'd like to help us, wouldn't you?" "Sure, but I I don't know
what it's all about." "Don't you have any idea?" "No, sir." "Do you
have any girlfriends, Paul?" "Well, you know..." "No, we don't know.
Why don't you tell us?" "Well, sure. I see girls ..." "You mean you
date girls? You take girls out?" "Yeah." "Do you date any one
particular girl?" There was a silence. "Do you have a girlfriend,
Paul?" "Yes." "What's her name?" Detective Bernstein "Chloe."
"Chloe what?" Detective Reese "Chloe Houston." Reese made a note.
"What's her address, Paul?" "Six-oh-two Oak Street, Denver." "What
are her parents' names?" "She lives with her mother." "And her name?"
"Jackie Houston. She's the governor of Colorado." The

detectives
looked at one another. Shit! That's all we need!

Reese held up a ring. "Is this your ring, Paul?" He studied it a
moment, then said reluctantly, "Yeah." "Did you give Chloe this ring?"
He swallowed nervously. "I I guess I did." "You're not sure?" "I
remember now. Yes, I did." "You came to Washington with some
classmates, right? Kind of a school group?" "That's right." "Was
Chloe part of that group?" "Yes, sir." "Where's Chloe now, Paul?"
Detective Bernstein "I I don't know." "When did you last see her?"
Detective Hogan "I guess a couple of days ago." "Two days ago?"
Detective Reese "Yeah." "And where was that?" Detective Bernstein "In
the White House." The detectives looked at one another in surprise.
"She was in the White House?" Reese asked. "Yes, sir. We were all on
a private tour. Chloe's mother arranged it." "And Chloe was with
you?" Detective Hogan "Yes." "Did anything unusual happen on the
tour?" Detective Bernstein

"What do you mean?" "Did you meet or talk to anyone on the tour?"
Detective Bernstein "Well, sure, the guide." "And that's all?"
Detective Reese "That's right." "Was Chloe with the group all the
time?" Detective Hogan "Yes " Yerby hesitated. "No. She slipped away
to go to the ladies' room. She was gone about fifteen minutes. When
she came back, she " He stopped. "She what?" Reese asked. "Nothing.
She just came back." The boy was obviously lying. "Son,"

Detective
Reese asked, "do you know that Chloe Houston is dead?"
They were
watching him closely. "No! My God! How?" The surprised
look on his
face could have been feigned. "Don't you know?"
Detective Bernstein
"No! I I can't believe it." "You had nothing to do with
her death?"
Detective Hogan "Of course not! I love ... I loved
Chloe." "Did you
ever go to bed with her?" Detective Bernstein "No. We we
were
waiting. We were going to get married." "But sometimes
you did drugs
together?" Detective Reese

"No! We never did drugs." The door opened and a burly
detective,
Harry Carter, came into the room. He walked over to Reese
and
whispered something in his ear. Reese nodded. He sat
there staring at
Paul Yerby. "When was the last time you saw Chloe
Houston?" "I told
you, in the White House." He shifted uncomfortably in his
chair.
Detective Reese leaned forward. "You're in a lot of
trouble, Paul.
Your fingerprints are all over the Imperial Suite at the
Monroe Arms
Hotel. How did they get there?" Paul Yerby sat there,
pale-faced.
"You can quit lying now. We've got you nailed." "I I
didn't do
anything." "Did you book the suite at the Monroe Arms?"
Detective
Bernstein "No, I didn't." The emphasis was on the "I."
Detective
Reese pounced on it. "But you know who did?" "No." The
answer came
too quickly. "You admit you were in the suite?"
Detective Hogan "Yes,
but but Chloe was alive when I left." "Why did you

leave?" Detective
Hogan "She asked me to. She she was expecting someone."
"Come on,
Paul. We know you killed her." Detective Bernstein "No!"
He was
trembling. "I swear I had nothing to do with it. I I
just went up to
the suite with her. I only stayed a little while."

"Because she was expecting someone?" Detective Reese
"Yes. She she
was kind of excited." "Did she tell you who she was going
to meet?"
Detective Hogan He was licking his lips. "No." "You're
lying. She
did tell you." "You said she was excited. What about?"
Detective
Reese Paul licked his lips again. "About about the man
she was going
to meet there for dinner." "Who was the man, Paul?"
Detective
Bernstein "I can't tell you." "Why not?" Detective Hogan
"I promised
Chloe I would never tell anyone." "Chloe is dead." Paul
Yerby's eyes
filled with tears. "I just can't believe it." "Give us
the man's
name." Detective Reese "I can't do that. I promised."
"Here's what's
going to happen to you: You're going to spend tonight in
jail. In the
morning, if you give us the name of the man she was going
to meet,
we'll let you go. Otherwise, we're going to book you for
murder one."
Detective Reese They waited for him to speak. Silence.
Nick Reese
nodded to Bernstein. "Take him away."

Detective Reese returned to Captain Miller's office. "I
have bad news
and I have worse news." "I haven't time for this, Nick."
"The bad
news is that I'm not sure it was the boy who gave her the

drug. The
worse news is that the girl's mother is the governor of
Colorado."
"Oh, God! The papers will love this." Captain Miller took
a deep
breath. "Why don't you think the boy's guilty?" "He
admits he was in
the girl's suite, but he said she told him to leave
because she was
expecting someone. I think the kid's too smart to come up
with a story
that stupid. What I do believe is that he knows who Chloe
Houston was
expecting. He won't say who it was." "Do you have any
idea?" "It was
her first time in Washington, and they were on a tour of
the White
House. She didn't know anyone here. She said she was
going to the
ladies' room. There is no public rest room in the White
House. She
would have had to go outside to the Visitor's Pavilion on
the Ellipse
at I5th and E streets or to the White House Visitor
Center. She was
gone about fifteen minutes. What I think happened is that
while trying
to find a ladies' room, she ran into someone in the White
House,
someone she might have recognized. Maybe someone she saw
on TV.
Anyway, it must have been somebody important. He led her
to a private
washroom and impressed her enough that she agreed to meet
him at the
Monroe Arms." Captain Miller was thoughtful. "I'd better
call the
White

House. They asked to be kept up-to-date on this. Don't
let up on the
kid. I want that name."

"Right."

As Detective Reese walked out the door, Captain Miller reached for the
telephone and dialed a number. A few minutes later, he was saying,
"Yes, sir. We have a material witness in custody. He's in a holding
cell at the Indiana Avenue police station.... We won't, sir. I think
the boy will give us the man's name tomorrow.... Yes, sir. I
understand." The line went dead.

Captain Miller sighed and went back to the pile of papers on his
desk.

At eight o'clock the following morning, when Detective Nick Reese went
to Paul Yerby's cell, Yerby's body was hanging from one of the top
bars.

Eighteen.

DEAD 16-YEAR-OLD IDENTIFIED AS DAUGHTER OF COLORADO GOVERNOR
BOYFRIEND

IN POLICE CUSTODY HANGS HIMSELF POLICE HUNT MYSTERY WITNESS

He stared at the headlines and felt suddenly faint. Sixteen years old.
She had looked older than that. What was he guilty of? Murder?
Manslaughter, maybe. Plus statutory rape. He had watched her come out
of the bathroom of the suite, wearing only a shy smile. "I've never
done this before." And he had put his arms around her and stroked her.
"I'm glad the first time is with me, honey." Earlier, he had shared a

glass of liquid Ecstasy with her. "Drink this. It will make you feel
good." They had made love, and afterward she had complained about not
feeling well. She had gotten out of bed, stumbled, and hit her head
against the table. An accident. Of course, the police would not see
it that way. But there's nothing to connect me with her. Nothing.

The whole episode had an air of unreality, a nightmare that had
happened to someone else. Somehow, seeing it in print made it real.

Through the walls of the office, he could hear the sound of traffic on
Pennsylvania Avenue, outside the White House, and he became aware again
of his surroundings. A cabinet meeting was scheduled to begin in a few
minutes. He took a deep breath. Pull yourself together.

In the Oval Office were gathered Vice President Melvin Wicks, Sime
Lombardo, and Peter Tager. Oliver walked in and sat behind his desk.
"Good morning, gentlemen." There were general greetings. Peter Tager
said, "Have you seen the Tribune, Mr. President?" "No." "They've
identified the girl who died at the Monroe Arms Hotel. I'm afraid it's
bad news." Oliver unconsciously stiffened in his chair. "Yes?" "Her
name is Chloe Houston. She's the daughter of Jackie Houston."

"Oh, my God!" The words barely escaped the president's lips. They
were staring at him, surprised at his reaction. He recovered quickly.
"I I knew Jackie Houston ... a long time ago. This this

is terrible
news. Terrible." Sime Lombardo said, "Even though
Washington crime is
not our responsibility, the Tribune is going to hammer us
on this."
Melvin Wicks spoke up. "Is there any way we can shut
Leslie Stewart
up?" Oliver thought of the passionate evening he had spent
with her.
"No," Oliver said. "Freedom of the press, gentlemen."
Peter Tager
turned to the president. "About the governor ... ?"
"I'll handle it."
He flicked down an intercom key. "Get me Governor Houston
in Denver."
"We've got to start some damage control," Peter Tager was
saying. "I'll
get together statistics on how much crime has gone down in
this
country, you've asked Congress for more money for our
police
departments, et cetera." The words sounded hollow even to
his own
ears. "This is terrible timing," Melvin Wicks said. The
intercom
buzzed. Oliver picked up the telephone. "Yes?" He
listened a moment,
then replaced the receiver. "The governor is on her way
to
Washington." He looked at Peter Tager. "Find out what
plane she's on,
Peter. Meet her and bring her here."

"Right. There's an editorial in the Tribune. It's pretty
rough."
Peter Tager handed Oliver the editorial page of the
newspaper.
PRESIDENT UNABLE TO CONTROL CRIME IN THE CAPITAL. "It
goes on from
there."

"Leslie Stewart is a bitch," Sime Lombardo said quietly.
"Someone
should have a little talk with her."

In his office at the Washington Tribune, Matt Baker was rereading the
editorial attacking the president for being soft on crime when Frank
Lonergan walked in. Lonergan was in his early forties, a bright,
street-smart journalist who had at one time worked on the police force.
He was one of the best investigative journalists in the business.

"You wrote this editorial, Frank?"

"Yes," he said.

"This paragraph about crime going down twenty-five percent in
Minnesota, that's still bothering me. Why did you just talk about
Minnesota?"

Lonergan said, "It was a suggestion from the Ice Princess."

"That's ridiculous," Matt Baker snapped. "I'll talk to her."

Leslie Stewart was on the telephone when Matt Baker walked into her
office. "I'll leave it to you to arrange the details, but I want us to
raise as much money for him as we can. As a matter of fact,

Senator Embry of Minnesota is stopping by for lunch today, and I'll get
a list of names from him. Thank you." She replaced the receiver.
"Matt." Matt Baker walked over to her desk. "I want to talk to you
about this editorial." "It's good, isn't it?" "It stinks, Leslie.
It's propaganda. The president's not responsible for

controlling crime
in Washington, D.C. We have a mayor who's supposed to do that, and a
police force. And what's this crap about crime going down twenty-five
percent in Minnesota? Where did you come up with those statistics?"
Leslie Stewart leaned back and said calmly, "Matt, this is my paper,
f'll say anything I want to say. Oliver Russell is a lousy president,
and Gregory Embry would make a great one. We're going to help him get
into the White House." She saw the expression on Mart's face and
softened. "Come on, Matt. The Tribune is going to be on the side of
the winner. Embry will be good for us. He's on his way here now.
Would you like to join us for lunch?" "No. I don't like people who
eat with their hands out." He turned and left the office. In the
corridor outside, Matt Baker ran into Senator Embry. The senator was
in his fifties, a self-important politician. "Oh, Senator!
Congratulations." Senator Embry looked at him, puzzled, "Thank you. Er
for what?"

"For bringing crime down twenty-five percent in your state." And Matt
Baker walked away, leaving the senator looking after him with a blank
expression on his face.

Lunch was in Leslie Stewart's antique-furnished dining room. A chef
was working in the kitchen preparing lunch as Leslie and Senator Embry
walked in. The captain hurried up to greet them. "Luncheon is ready
whenever you wish, Miss Stewart. Would you care for a

drink?" "Not
for me," Leslie said. "Senator?" "Well, I don't usually drink during
the day, but I'll have a martini." Leslie Stewart was aware that
Senator Embry drank a lot during the day. She had a complete file on
him. He had a wife and five children and kept a Japanese mistress.
His hobby was secretly funding a paramilitary group in his home state.
None of this was important to Leslie. What mattered was that Gregory
Embry was a man who believed in letting big business alone and
Washington Tribune Enterprises was big business. Leslie intended to
make it bigger, and when Embry was president, he was going to help her.
They were seated at the dining table. Senator Embry took a sip of his
second martini. "I want to thank you for the fundraiser, Leslie.
That's a nice gesture." She smiled warmly. "It's my pleasure. I'll do
everything I can to help you beat Oliver Russell."

"Well, I think I stand a pretty good chance."

"I think so, too. The people are getting tired of him and his
scandals. My guess is that if there's one more scandal between now and
election, they'll throw him out."

Senator Embry studied her a moment. "Do you think there will be?"

Leslie nodded and said softly, "I wouldn't be surprised."

The lunch was delicious.

The call came from Antonio Valdez, an assistant in the coroner's

office. "Miss Stewart, you said you wanted me to keep you informed
about the Chloe Houston case?" "Yes ..." "The cops asked us to keep a
lid on it, but since you've been such a good friend, I thought " "Don't
worry. You'll be taken care of. Tell me about the autopsy." "Yes,
ma'am. The cause of death was a drug called Ecstasy." "What?"
"Ecstasy. She took it in liquid form." "I have a little surprise for
you that I want you to try.... This is liquid Ecstasy.... A friend of
mine gave me this...." And the woman who had been found in the
Kentucky River had died of an overdose of liquid Ecstasy. Leslie sat
there motionless, her heart pounding. There is a God.

Leslie sent for Frank Lonergan, "I want you to follow up on the death
of Chloe Houston. I think the president is involved."

Frank Lonergan was staring at her incredulously. "The president?"

"There's a cover-up going on. I'm convinced of it. That boy they
arrested, who conveniently committed suicide ... dig into that. And I
want you to check on the president's movements the afternoon and
evening of her death. I want this to be a private investigation. Very
private. You'll report only to me."

Frank Lonergan took a deep breath. "You know what this could mean?"

"Get started. And Frank?"

"Yes?"

"Check the Internet for a drug called Ecstasy. And look for a
connection with Oliver Russell."

In a medical Internet site devoted to the hazards of the drug, Lonergan
found the story of Miriam Friedland, the former secretary to Oliver
Russell. She was in a hospital in Frankfort, Kentucky. Lonergan
telephoned to inquire about her. A doctor said, "Miss Friedland passed
away two days ago. She never recovered from her coma."

Frank Lonergan put in a telephone call to the office of Governor
Houston.

"I'm sorry," her secretary told him, "Governor Houston is on her way to
Washington."

Ten minutes later, Frank Lonergan was on his way to National Airport.
He was too late.

As the passengers descended from the plane, Lonergan saw Peter Tager
approach an attractive blonde in her forties and greet her. The two of
them talked for a moment, and then Tager led her to a waiting
limousine.

Watching in the distance, Lonergan thought, I've got to talk to that
lady. He headed back toward town and began making calls on his car
phone. On the third call, he learned that Governor Houston was
expected at the Four Seasons Hotel.

When Jackie Houston was ushered into the private study next to the Oval

Office, Oliver Russell was waiting for her. He took her hands in his
and said, "I'm so terribly sorry, Jackie. There are no words." It had
been almost seventeen years since he had last seen her. They had met
at a lawyers' convention in Chicago. She had just gotten out of law
school. She was young and attractive and eager, and they had had a
brief, torrid affair. Seventeen years ago. And Chloe was sixteen
years old.

He dared not ask Jackie the question in his mind. I don't want to
know. They looked at each other in silence, and for a moment Oliver
thought she was going to speak of the past. He looked away. Jackie
Houston said, "The police think Paul Yerby had something to do with
Chloe's death." "That's right." "No." "No?" "Paul was in love with
Chloe. He never would have harmed her." Her voice broke. "They they
were going to get married one day." "According to my information,
Jackie, they found the boy's fingerprints in the hotel room where she
was killed." Jackie Houston said, "The newspapers said that it... that
it happened in the Imperial Suite at the Monroe Arms." "Yes."
"Oliver, Chloe was on a small allowance. Paul's father was a retired
clerk. Where did Chloe get the money for the Imperial Suite?" "I I
don't know." "Someone has to find out. I won't leave until I know who
is responsible for the death of my daughter." She frowned. "Chloe had
an appointment to see you that afternoon. Did you see her?" There was

a brief hesitation. "No. I wish I had. Unfortunately,
an emergency
came up, and I had to cancel our appointment."

In an apartment at the other end of town, lying in bed,
their naked
bodies spooned together, he could feel the tension in her.
"Are you
okay, Jo Ann?" "I'm fine, Alex." "You seem far away,
baby. What are
you thinking about?" "Nothing," JoAnn McGrath said.
"Nothing?"
"Well, to tell the truth, I was thinking about that poor
little girl
who was murdered at the hotel." "Yeah, I read about it.
She was some
governor's daughter." "Yes." "Do the police know who she
was with?"
"No. They were all over the hotel questioning everybody."
"You, too?"
"Yeah. All I could tell them was about the telephone
call." "What
telephone call?" "The one someone in that suite made to
the White
House." He was suddenly still. He said casually, "That
doesn't mean
anything. Everybody gets a kick out of calling the White
House. Do
that to me again, baby. Got any more maple syrup?"

Frank Lonergan had just returned to his office from the
airport when
the phone rang. "Lonergan."

"Hello, Mr. Lonergan. This is Shallow Throat." Alex
Cooper, a
small-time parasite who fancied himself a Watergate-class
tipster. It
was his idea of a joke. "Are you still paying for hot
tips?"

"Depends on how hot."

"This one will burn your ass. I want five thousand

dollars for it."

"Goodbye."

"Wait a minute. Don't hang up. It's about that girl who was murdered
at the Monroe Arms."

Frank Lonergan was suddenly interested. "What about her?"

"Can you and me meet somewhere?"

"I'll see you at Ricco's in half an hour."

At two o'clock, Frank Lonergan and Alex Cooper were in a booth at
Ricco's. Alex Cooper was a thin weasel of a man, and Lonergan hated
doing business with him. Lonergan wasn't sure where Cooper got his
information, but he had been very helpful in the past. "I hope you're
not wasting my time," Lonergan said. "Oh, I don't think it's a waste
of time. How would you feel if I told you there's a White House
connection to the girl's murder?" There was a smug smile on his
face.

Frank Lonergan managed to conceal his excitement. "Go on."

"Five thousand dollars?"

"One thousand."

"Two."

"You have a deal. Talk."

"My girlfriend's a telephone operator at the Monroe Arms."

"What's her name?"

"JoAnn McGrath."

Lonergan made a note. "So?"

"Someone in the Imperial Suite made a telephone call to the White House
during the time the girl was there."

"I think the president is involved," Leslie Stewart had said. "Are you
sure about this?"

"Horse's mouth."

"I'll check it out. If it's true, you'll get your money. Have you
mentioned this to anyone else?"

"Nope."

"Good. Don't." Lonergan rose. "We'll keep in touch."

"There's one more thing," Cooper said.

Lonergan stopped. "Yes?"

"You've got to keep me out of this. I don't want JoAnn to know that I
talked to anyone about it."

"No problem."

And Alex Cooper was alone, thinking about how he was going to spend the
two thousand dollars without JoAnn's knowing about it.

T7O

The Monroe Arms switchboard was in a cubicle behind the lobby reception
desk. When Lonergan walked in carrying a clipboard, JoAnn McGrath was
on duty. She was saying into the mouthpiece, "I'm ringing

for you."
She connected a call and turned to Lonergan. "Can I help
you?"
"Telephone Company," Lonergan said. He flashed some
identification.
"We have a problem here." JoAnn McGrath looked at him,
surprised.
"What kind of problem?" "Someone reported that they're
being charged
for calls they didn't make." He pretended to consult the
clipboard.
"October fifteenth. They were charged for a call to
Germany, and they
don't even know anyone in Germany. They're pretty teed
off." "Well, I
don't know anything about that," JoAnn said indignantly.
"I don't even
remember placing any calls to Germany in the last month."
"Do you have
a record of the fifteenth?" "Of course." "I'd like to
see it." "Very
well." She found a folder under a pile of papers and
handed it to him.
The switchboard was buzzing. While she attended to the
calls, Lonergan
quickly went through the folder. October I2th ... i3th
... i4th ...
i6th ... The page for the fifteenth was missing.

Frank Lonergan was waiting in the lobby of the Four
Seasons when Jackie
Houston returned from the White House. "Governor
Houston?" She
turned. "Yes?" "Frank Lonergan. I'm with the Washington
Tribune. I
want to tell you how sorry all of us are, Governor."
"Thank you." "I
wonder if I could talk to you for a minute?" "I'm really
not in the "
"I might be able to be helpful." He nodded toward the
lounge off the
main lobby. "Could we go in there for a moment?" She took
a deep
breath. "All right." They walked into the lounge and sat

down. "I
understand that your daughter went on a tour of the White House the day
she..." He couldn't bring himself to finish the sentence. "Yes. She
she was on a tour with her school friends. She was very excited about
meeting the president." Lonergan kept his voice casual. "She was
going to see President Russell?" "Yes. I arranged it. We're old
friends." "And did she see him, Governor Houston?" "No. He wasn't
able to see her." Her voice was choked. "There's one thing I'm sure
of." "Yes, ma'am."

"Paul Yerby didn't kill her. They were in love with each other."

"But the police said "

"I don't care what they said. They arrested an innocent boy, and he he
was so upset that he hanged himself. It's awful."

Frank Lonergan studied her for a moment. "If Paul Yerby didn't kill
your daughter, do you have any idea who might have? I mean, did she
say anything about meeting anyone in Washington?"

"No. She didn't know a soul here. She was so looking forward to ...
to ..." Her eyes brimmed with tears. "I'm sorry. You'll have to
excuse me."

"Of course. Thanks for your time, Governor Houston."

Lonergan's next stop was at the morgue. Helen Chuan was just coming
out of the autopsy room. "Well, look who's here." "Hi, Doc." "What

brings you down here, Frank?" "I wanted to talk to you about Paul
Yerby." Helen Chuan sighed. "It's a damn shame. Those kids were both
so young." "Why would a boy like that commit suicide?" Helen Chuan
shrugged. "Who knows?" "I mean are you sure he committed suicide?"
"If he didn't, he gave a great imitation. His belt was wrapped around
his neck so tightly that they had to cut it in half to bring him
down."

"There were no other marks or anything on his body that might have
suggested foul play?"

She looked at him, curious. "No."

Lonergan nodded. "Okay. Thanks. You don't want to keep your patients
waiting."

"Very funny."

There was a phone booth in the outside corridor. From the Denver
information operator, Lonergan got the number of Paul Yerby's parents.
Mrs. Yerby answered the phone. Her voice sounded weary. "Hello."
"Mrs. Yerby?" "Yes." "I'm sorry to bother you. This is Frank
Lonergan. I'm with the Washington Tribune. I wanted to "
"I can't..."
A moment later, Mr. Yerby was on the line. "I'm sorry. My wife is
... Newspapers have been bothering us all morning. We don't want to "
"This will only take a minute, Mr. Yerby. There are some people in
Washington who don't believe your son killed Chloe Houston." "Of

course he didn't!" His voice suddenly became stronger. "Paul could
never, never have done anything like that."

"Did Paul have any friends in Washington, Mr. Yerby?" "No. He didn't
know anyone there." "I see. Well, if there's anything I can do ..."
"There is something you can do for us, Mr. Lonergan. We've arranged
to have Paul's body shipped back here, but I'm not sure how to get his
possessions. We'd like to have whatever he ... If you could tell me
who to talk to ..." "I can handle that for you." "We'd appreciate it.
Thank you."

In the Homicide Branch office, the sergeant on duty was opening a
carton containing Paul Yerby's personal effects. "There's not much in
it," he said. "Just the kid's clothes and a camera."

Lonergan reached into the box and picked up a black leather belt.

It was uncut.

When Frank Lonergan walked into the office of President Russell's
appointments secretary, Deborah Kanner, she was getting ready to leave
for lunch. "What can I do for you, Frank?" "I've got a problem,
Deborah." "What else is new?" Frank Lonergan pretended to look at
some notes. "I have information that on October fifteenth the
president had a secret meeting here with an emissary from China to talk
about Tibet."

"I don't know of any such meeting."

"Could you just check it out for me?"

"What did you say the date was?"

"October fifteenth." Loriergan watched as Deborah pulled an
appointment book from a drawer and skimmed through it.

"October fifteenth? What time was this meeting supposed to be?"

"Ten P.M." here in the Oval Office."

She shook her head. "Nope. At ten o'clock that night the president
was in a meeting with General Whitman."

Lonergan frowned. "That's not what I heard. Could I have a look at
that book?"

"Sorry. It's confidential, Frank."

"Maybe I got a bum steer. Thanks, Deborah." He left.

Thirty minutes later, Frank Lonergan was talking to General Steve
Whitman. "General, the Tribune would like to do some coverage on the
meeting you had with the president on October fifteenth. I understand
some important points were discussed." The general shook his head. "I
don't know where you get your information, Mr. Lonergan. That meeting
was called off. The president had another appointment." "Are you
sure?"

"Yes. We're going to reschedule it." "Thank you, General."

Frank Lonergan returned to the White House. He walked

into Deborah
Kanner's office again. "What is it this time, Frank?"
"Same thing,"
Lonergan said ruefully. "My informant swears that at ten
o'clock on
the night of October fifteenth the president was here in a
meeting with
a Chinese emissary to discuss Tibet." She looked at him,
exasperated.
"How many times do I have to tell you that there was no
such meeting?"
Lonergan sighed. "Frankly, I don't know what to do. My
boss really
wants to run that story. It's big news. I guess we'll
just have to go
with it." He started toward the door. "Wait a minute!"
He turned.
"Yes?" "You can't run that story. It's not true. The
president will
be furious." "It's not my decision." Deborah hesitated.
"If I can
prove to you that he was meeting with General Whitman,
will you forget
about it?" "Sure. I don't want to cause any problems."
Lonergan
watched Deborah pull the appointment book out again and
flip the pages.
"Here's a list of the president's appointments for that
date. Look.
October fifteenth." There were two pages of listings.
Deborah pointed
to a 10:00 P.M. entry. "There it is, in black and white."
"You're
right," Lonergan said. He was busy scanning the page.
There was an
entry at three o'clock. Chloe Houston.

Nineteen.

The hastily called meeting in the Oval Office had been
going on for
only a few minutes and the air was already crackling with
dissension.
The secretary of defense was saying, "If we delay any

longer, the
situation is going to get completely out of control. It will be too
late to stop it." "We can't rush into this." General Stephen Gossard
turned to the head of the CIA. "How hard is your information?" "It's
difficult to say. We're fairly certain that Libya is buying a variety
of weapons from Iran and China." Oliver turned to the secretary of
state. "Libya denies it?" "Of course. So do China and Iran." Oliver
asked, "What about the other Arab states?"

The CIA chief responded. "From the information I have, Mr. President,
if a serious attack is launched on Israel, I think it's going to be the
excuse that all the other Arab states have been waiting for. They'll
join in to wipe Israel out."

They were all looking at Oliver expectantly. "Do you have reliable
assets in Libya?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"I want an update. Keep me informed. If there are signs of an attack,
we have no choice but to move."

The meeting was adjourned.

Oliver's secretary's voice came over the intercom. "Mr. Tager would
like to see you, Mr. President."

"Have him come in."

"How did the meeting go?" Peter Tager asked. "Oh, it was just your
average meeting," Oliver said bitterly, "about whether I

want to start
a war now or later." Tager said sympathetically, "It goes with the
territory." "Right." "Something of interest has come up." "Sit
down." Peter Tager took a seat. "What do you know about the United
Arab Emirates?" "Not a lot," Oliver said. "Five or six Arab states
got together twenty years ago or so and formed a coalition." "Seven of
them. They joined together in 1971. Abu Dhabi, Fujaira, Dubai,
Sharjah, Ras al-Khaimah, Umm al-Qaiwan, and

Ajman. When they started out, they weren't very strong, but the
Emirates have been incredibly well run. Today they have one of the
world's highest standards of living. Their gross domestic product last
year was over thirty-nine billion dollars."

Oliver said impatiently, "I assume there's a point to this, Peter?"

"Yes, sir. The head of the council of the United Arab Emirates wants
to meet with you."

"All right. I'll have the secretary of defense "

"Today. In private."

"Are you serious? I couldn't possibly "

"Oliver, the Majus their council is one of the most important Arab
influences in the world. It has the respect of every other Arab
nation. This could be an important breakthrough. I know this is
unorthodox, but I think you should meet with them."

"State would have a fit if I "

"I'll make the arrangements."

There was a long silence. "Where do they want to meet?"

"They have a yacht anchored in Chesapeake Bay, near Annapolis. I can
get you there quietly."

Oliver sat there, studying the ceiling. Finally, he leaned forward and
pressed down the intercom switch. "Cancel my appointments for this
afternoon."

The yacht, a 212-foot Feadship, was moored at the dock. They were
waiting for him. All the crew members were Arabs.

"Welcome, Mr. President." It was Ali al-Fulani, the secretary at one
of the United Arab Emirates. "Please come aboard." Oliver stepped
aboard and Ali al-Fulani signaled to one of the men. A few moments
later, the yacht was underway. "Shall we go below?" Right. Where I
can be killed or kidnapped. This is the stupidest thing I have ever
done, Oliver decided. Maybe they brought me here so they can begin
their attack on Israel, and I won't be able to give orders to
retaliate. Why the hell did I let Tager talk me into this? Oliver
followed Ali al-Fulani downstairs into the sumptuous main saloon, which
was decorated in Middle Eastern style. There were four muscular Arabs
standing on guard in the saloon. An imposing-looking man seated on the
couch rose as Oliver came in. Ali al-Fulani said, "Mr. President, His

Majesty King Hamad of Ajman." The two men shook hands. "Your
Majesty." "Thank you for coming, Mr. President. Would you care for
some tea?" "No, thank you." "I believe you will find this visit well
worth your while." King Hamad began to pace. "Mr. President, over
the centuries, it has been difficult, if not impossible, to bridge the
problems that divide us philosophical, linguistic, religious, cultural.
Those are the reasons there have been so many wars in our part of the
world. If Jews confiscate the land of Palestinians, no one in Omaha or
Kansas is affected. Their lives go on the same. If a synagogue in
Jerusalem is bombed, the Italians in Rome and Venice pay no attention."
Oliver wondered where this was heading. Was it a warning of a coming
war? "There is only one part of the world that suffers from all the
wars and bloodshed in the Middle East. And that is the Middle East."
He sat down across from Oliver. "It is time for us to put a stop to
this madness." Here it comes, Oliver thought. "The heads of the Arab
states and the Majlis have authorized me to make you an offer." "What
kind of an offer?" "An offer of peace." Oliver blinked. "Peace?"
"We want to make peace with your ally, Israel. Your embargoes against
Iran and other Arab countries have cost us untold billions of dollars.
We want to put an end to that. If the United States will act as a
sponsor, the Arab countries including Iran, Libya, and Syria have
agreed to sit down and negotiate a permanent peace treaty with Israel."

Oliver was stunned. When he found his voice, he said, "You're doing
this because " "I assure you it is not out of love for the Israelis or
for the Americans. It is in our own interests. Too many of our sons
have been killed in this madness. We want it to end. It is enough. We
want to be free to sell all our oil to the world again. We are
prepared to go to war if necessary, but we would prefer peace."

Oliver took a deep breath. "I think I would like some tea."

"I wish you had been there," Oliver said to Peter Tager. "It was
incredible. They're ready to go to war, but they don't want to.
They're pragmatists. They want to sell their oil to the world, so they
want peace."

"That's fantastic," Tager said enthusiastically. "When this gets out,
you're going to be a hero."

"And I can do this on my own," Oliver told him. "It doesn't have to go
through Congress. I'll have a talk with the Prime Minister of Israel.
We'll help him make a deal with the Arab countries." He looked at
Tager and said ruefully, "For a few minutes there, I thought I was
going to be kidnapped."

"No chance," Peter Tager assured him. "I had a boat and a helicopter
following you."

"Senator Davis is here to see you, Mr. President. He has no

appointment, but he says it's urgent."

"Hold up my next appointment and send the senator in."
The door opened
and Todd Davis walked into the Oval

Office.

"This is a nice surprise, Todd. Is everything all right?"
Senator
Davis took a seat. "Fine, Oliver. I just thought you and
I should
have a little chat."

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Oliver smiled. "I have a pretty full schedule today, but
for you "
"This will take only a few minutes. I ran into Peter
Tager. He told
me about your meeting with the Arabs." Oliver grinned.
"Isn't that
wonderful? It looks like we're finally going to have
peace in the
Middle East." He slammed a fist on the desk. "After all
these
decades! That's what my administration is going to be
remembered for,
Todd." Senator Davis asked quietly, "Have you thought
this through,
Oliver?" Oliver frowned. "What? What do you mean?"
"Peace is a
simple word, but it has a lot of ramifications. Peace
doesn't have any
financial benefits. When there's a war, countries buy
billions of
dollars' worth of armaments that are made here in the
United States. In
peacetime, they don't need any. Because Iran can't sell
its oil, oil
prices are up, and the United States gets the benefit of
that." Oliver
was listening to him unbelievingly. "Todd this is the
opportunity of a

lifetime!" "Don't be naive, Oliver. If we had really wanted to make
peace between Israel and the Arab countries, we could have done it long
ago. Israel is a tiny country. Any one of the last half-dozen
presidents could have forced them to make a deal with the Arabs, but
they preferred to keep things as they were. Don't misunderstand me.
Jews are fine people. I work with some of them in the Senate." "I
don't believe that you can " "Believe what you like, Oliver. A peace
treaty now would not be in the best interest of this country. I don't
want you to go ahead with it."

"I have to go ahead with it."

"Don't tell me what you have to do, Oliver." Senator Davis leaned
forward. "I'll tell you. Don't forget who put you in that chair."

Oliver said quietly, "Todd, you may not respect me, but you must
respect this office. Regardless of who put me here, I'm the
president."

Senator Davis got to his feet. "The president? You're a fucking
blow-up toy! You're my dummy, Oliver. You take orders, you don't give
them."

Oliver looked at him for a long moment. "How many oil fields do you
and your friends own, Todd?"

"That's none of your goddam business. If you go through with this,
you're finished. Do you hear me? I'm giving you

twenty-four hours to
come to your senses."

At dinner that evening, Jan said, "Father asked me to talk to you,
Oliver. He's very upset." He looked across the table at his wife and
thought, I'm going to have to fight you, too. "He told me what was
happening." "Did he?" "Yes." She leaned across the table. "And I
think what you're going to do is wonderful."

It took a moment for Oliver to understand. "But your father's against
it."

"I know. And he's wrong. If they're willing to make peace you have to
help."

Oliver sat there listening to Jan's words, studying her. He thought
about how well she had handled herself as the First Lady. She had
become involved in important charities and had been an advocate for a
half-dozen major causes. She was lovely and intelligent and caring and
it was as though Oliver were seeing her for the first time. Why have I
been running around? Oliver thought. I have everything I need right
here.

"Will it be a long meeting tonight?"

"No," Oliver said slowly. "I'm going to cancel it. I'm staying
home."

That evening, Oliver made love to Jan for the first time in weeks, and
it was wonderful. And in the morning, he thought, I'm

going to have
Peter get rid of the apartment.

The note was on his desk the next morning. I want you to know that I
am a real fan of yours, and I would not do anything to harm you. I was
in the garage of the Monroe Arms on the iph, and I was very surprised
to see you there. The next day when I read about the murder of that
young girl, I knew why you went back to wipe your fingerprints off the
elevator but tons. I'm sure that all the newspapers would be
interested in my story and would pay me a lot of money. But like I
said, I'm a fan of yours. I certainly would not want to do anything to
hurt you. I could use some financial help, and if you are interested,
this will be just between us. I will get in touch with you in a few
days while you think about it.

Sincerely, A friend

"Jesus," Sime Lombardo said softly. "This is incredible. How was it
delivered?"

"It was mailed," Peter Tager told him. "Addressed to the president,
"Personal." "

Sime Lombardo said, "It could be some nut who's just trying to "

"We can't take a chance, Sime. I don't believe for a minute that it's
true, but if even a whisper of this gets out, it would destroy the
president. We must protect him."

"How do we do that?"

"First, we have to find out who sent this."

Peter Tager was at the Federal Bureau of Investigation headquarters at
loth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, talking to Special Agent Clay
Jacobs. "You said it was urgent, Peter?" "Yes." Peter Tager opened a
briefcase and took out a single sheet of paper. He slid it across the
desk. Clay Jacobs picked it up and read it aloud:

" "I want you to know that I'm a real fan of yours.... I will get in
touch with you in a few days while you think about it." "

Everything in between had been whited out.

Jacobs looked up. "What is this?"

"It involves the highest security," Peter Tager said. "The president
asked me to try to find out who sent it. He would like you to check it
for fingerprints."

Clay Jacobs studied the paper again, frowning. "This is highly
unusual, Peter."

"Why?"

"It just smells wrong."

"All the president wants is for you to give him the name of the
individual who wrote it."

"Assuming his fingerprints are on it."

Peter Tager nodded. "Assuming his fingerprints are on it."

"Wait here." Jacobs rose and left the office.

Peter Tager sat there looking out the window, thinking about the letter
and its possible terrible consequences.

Exactly seven minutes later, Clay Jacobs returned.

"You're in luck," he said.

Peter Tager's heart began to race. "You found something?"

"Yes." Jacobs handed Tager a slip of paper. "The man you're looking
for was involved in a traffic accident about a year ago. His name is
Carl Gorman. He works as a clerk at the Monroe Arms." He stood there
a moment, studying Tager. "Is there anything else you'd like to tell
me about this?" "No," Peter Tager said sincerely. "There isn't."

"Frank Lonergan is on line three, Miss Stewart. He says it's
urgent."

"I'll take it." Leslie picked up the telephone and pressed a button.
"Frank?"

"Are you alone?"

"Yes."

She heard him take a deep breath. "Okay. Here we go." He spoke for
the next ten minutes without interruption.

Leslie Stewart hurried into Matt Baker's office. "We have to talk,
Matt." She sat down across from his desk. "What if I told you that

Oliver Russell is involved in the murder of Chloe Houston?" "For
openers, I'd say you are paranoid and that you've gone over the edge."
"Frank Lonergan just phoned in. He talked to Governor Houston, who
doesn't believe that Paul Yerby killed her daughter. He talked to Paul
Yerby's parents. They don't believe it either." "I wouldn't expect
them to," Matt Baker said. "If that's the only " "That's just the
beginning. Frank went down to the morgue and spoke to the coroner. She
told him that the kid's belt was so tight that they had to cut it away
from his throat." He was listening more intently now. "And ?" "Frank
went down to pick up Yerby's belongings. His belt was there. Intact."
Matt Baker drew a deep breath. "You're telling me that he was murdered
in prison and that there was a cover-up?" "I'm not telling you
anything. I'm just reporting the facts. Oliver Russell tried to get
me to use Ecstasy once. When he was running for governor, a woman who
was a legal secretary died from Ecstasy. While he was governor, his
secretary was found in a park in an Ecstasy-induced coma. Lonergan
learned that Oliver called the hospital and suggested they take her off
life-support systems." Leslie leaned forward. "There was a telephone
call from the Imperial Suite to the White House the night Chloe Houston
was murdered. Frank checked the hotel telephone records. The page for
the fifteenth was missing. The president's appointments secretary told
Lonergan that the president had a meeting with General Whitman that

night. There was no meeting. Frank spoke to Governor Houston, and she
said that Chloe was on a tour of the White House and that she had
arranged for her daughter to meet the president." There was a long
silence. "Where's Frank Lonergan now?" Matt Baker asked. "He's
tracking down Carl Gorman, the hotel clerk who booked the Imperial
Suite."

Jeremy Robinson was saying, "I'm sorry. We don't give out personal
information about our employees." Frank Lonergan said, "All I'm asking
for is his home address so I can " "It wouldn't do you any good. Mr.
Gorman is on vacation." Lonergan sighed. "That's too bad. I was
hoping he could fill in a few blank spots." "Blank spots?" "Yes.
We're doing a big story on the death of Governor Houston's daughter in
your hotel. Well, I'll just have to piece it together without Gorman."
He took out a pad and a pen. "How long has this hotel been here? I
want to know all about its background, its clientele, its " Jeremy
Robinson frowned. "Wait a minute! Surely that's not necessary. I
mean she could have died anywhere." Frank Lonergan said
sympathetically, "I know, but it happened here. Your hotel is going to
become as famous as Watergate." "Mr. ?" "Lonergan." "Mr. Lonergan,
I would appreciate it if you could I mean this kind of publicity is
very bad. Isn't there some way ?" Lonergan was thoughtful for a
moment. "Well, if I spoke to Mr. Gorman, I suppose I could find a
different angle." "I would really appreciate that. Let

me get you his
address."

Frank Lonergan was becoming nervous. As the outline of events began to
take shape, it became clear that there was a murder conspiracy and a
cover-up at the highest level. Before he went to see the hotel clerk,
he decided to stop at his apartment house. His wife, Rita, was in the
kitchen preparing dinner. She was a petite redhead with sparkling
green eyes and a fair complexion. She turned in surprise as her
husband walked in. "Frank, what are you doing home in the middle of
the day?" "Just thought I'd drop in and say hello." She looked at his
face. "No. There's something going on. What is it?" He hesitated.
"How long has it been since you've seen your mother?" "I saw her last
week. Why?" "Why don't you go visit her again, honey?" "Is anything
wrong?" He grinned. "Wrong?" He walked over to the mantel. "You'd
better start dusting this off. We're going to put a Pulitzer Prize
here and a Peabody Award here." "What are you talking about?" "I'm on
to something that's going to blow everybody away and I mean people in
high places. It's the most exciting story I've ever been involved
in."

"Why do you want me to go see my mother?"

He shrugged. "There's just an outside chance that this could get to be
a little dangerous. There are some people who don't want this story to
get out. I'd feel better if you were away for a few days,

just until
this breaks."

"But if you're in danger "

"I'm not in any danger."

"You're sure nothing's going to happen to you?"

"Positive. Pack a few things, and I'll call you tonight."

"All right," Rita said reluctantly.

Lonergan looked at his watch. "I'll drive you to the train station."

One hour later, Lonergan stopped in front of a modest brick house in
the Wheaton area. He got out of the car, walked to the front door, and
rang the bell. There was no answer. He rang again and waited. The
door suddenly swung open and a heavyset middle-aged woman stood in the
doorway, regarding him suspiciously. "Yes?" "I'm with the Internal
Revenue Service," Lonergan said. He flashed a piece of identification.
"I want to see Carl Gorman." "My brother's not here." "Do you know
where he is?" "No." Too fast. Lonergan nodded. "That's a shame.
Well, you might as well start packing up his things. I'll have the
department send over the vans." Lonergan started back down the
driveway toward his car. "Wait a minute! What vans? What are you
talking about?" Lonergan stopped and turned. "Didn't your brother
tell you?" "Tell me what?" Lonergan took a few steps back toward the
house. "He's in trouble." She looked at him anxiously. "What kind of

trouble?" "I'm afraid I'm not at liberty to discuss it." He shook his
head. "He seems like a nice guy, too." "He is," she said fervently.
"Carl is a wonderful person." Lonergan nodded. "That was my feeling
when we were questioning him down at the bureau." She was panicky.
"Questioning him about what?" "Cheating on his income tax. It's too
bad. I wanted to tell him about a loophole that could have helped him
out, but " He shrugged. "If he's not here..." He turned to go again.
"Wait! He's he's at a fishing lodge. I I'm not supposed to tell
anybody." He shrugged. "That's okay with me." "No ... but this is
different. It's the Sunshine Fishing Lodge on the lake in Richmond,
Virginia." "Fine. I'll contact him there." "That would be wonderful.
You're sure he'll be all right?" "Absolutely," Lonergan said. "I'll
see that he's taken care of."

Lonergan took 1-95, heading south. Richmond was a little over a
hundred miles away. On a vacation, years ago, Lonergan had fished the
lake, and he had been lucky.

He hoped he would be as lucky this time.

It was drizzling, but Carl Gorman did not mind. That's when the fish
were supposed to bite. He was fishing for striped bass, using large
minnows on slip bobbers, far out behind the row-boat. The waves lapped
against the small boat in the middle of the lake, and the bait drifted
behind the boat, untouched. The fish were in no hurry. It did not

matter. Neither was he. He had never been happier. He was going to
be rich beyond his wildest dreams. It had been sheer luck. You have
to be at the right place at the right time. He had returned to the
Monroe Arms to pick up a jacket he had forgotten and was about to leave
the garage when the private elevator door opened. When he saw who got
out, he had sat in his car, stunned. He had watched the man return,
wipe off his fingerprints, then drive away. It was not until he read
about the murder the following day that he had put it all together. In
a way, he felt sorry for the man. I really am a fan of his. The
trouble is, when you're that famous, you can never hide. Wherever you
go, the world knows you. He'll pay me to be quiet. He has no choice.
I'll start with a hundred thousand. Once he pays that, he'll have to
keep paying.

Maybe I'll buy a chateau in France or a chalet in Switzerland.

He felt a tug at the end of his line and snapped the rod toward him. He
could feel the fish trying to get away. You're not going anywhere.
I've got you hooked.

In the distance, he heard a large speedboat approaching. They
shouldn't allow power boats on the lake. They'll scare all the fish
away. The speedboat was bearing down on him.

"Don't get too close," Carl shouted.

The speedboat seemed to be heading right toward him.

"Hey! Be careful. Watch where you're going. For God's sake "

The speedboat plowed into the rowboat, cutting it in half, the water
sucking Gorman under.

Damn drunken fool! He was gasping for air. He managed to get his head
above water. The speedboat had circled and was heading straight for
him again. And the last thing Carl Gorman felt before the boat smashed
into his skull was the tug of the fish on his line.

When Frank Lonergan arrived, the area was crowded with police cars, a
fire engine, and an ambulance. The ambulance was just pulling away.
Frank Lonergan got out of his car and said to a bystander, "What's all
the excitement?" "Some poor guy was in an accident on the lake.
There's not much left of him." And Lonergan knew.

At midnight, Frank Lonergan was working at his computer, alone in his
apartment, writing the story that was going to destroy the President of
the United States. It was a story that would earn him a Pulitzer
Prize. There was no doubt about it in his mind. This was going to
make him more famous than Woodward and Bernstein. It was the story of
the century. He was interrupted by the sound of the doorbell. He got
up and walked over to the front door. "Who is it?" "A package from
Leslie Stewart." She's found some new information. He opened the
door. There was a glint of metal, and an unbearable pain tore his chest

apart. Then nothing.

Twenty.

Frank Lonergan's living room looked as if it had been struck by a
miniature hurricane. All the drawers and cabinets had been pulled open
and their contents had been scattered over the floor. Nick Reese
watched Frank Lonergan's body being removed. He turned to Detective
Steve Brown. "Any sign of the murder weapon?" "No." "Have you talked
to the neighbors?" "Yeah. The apartment building is a zoo, full of
monkeys. See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil. Nada. Mrs.
Lonergan is on her way back here. She heard the news on the radio.
There have been a couple other robberies here in the last six months,
and "

"I'm not so sure this was a robbery."

"What do you mean?"

"Lonergan was down at headquarters the other day to check on Paul
Yerby's things. I'd like to know what story Lonergan was working on.
No papers in the drawers?"

"Nope."

"No notes?"

"Nothing."

"So either he was very neat, or someone took the trouble to clean
everything out." Reese walked over to the work table. There was a

cable dangling off the table, connected to nothing. Reese held it up.
"What's this?"

Detective Brown walked over. "It's a power cable for a computer. There
must have been one here. That means there could be backups
somewhere."

"They may have taken the computer, but Lonergan might have saved copies
of his files. Let's check it out."

They found the backup disk in a briefcase in Lonergan's automobile.
Reese handed it to Brown. "I want you to take this down to
headquarters. There's probably a password to get into it. Have Chris
Colby look at it. He's an expert." The front door of the apartment
opened and Rita Lonergan walked in. She looked pale and distraught.
She stopped when she saw the men. "Mrs. Lonergan?"

"Who are ?"

"Detective Nick Reese, Homicide. This is Detective Brown."

Rita Lonergan looked around. "Where is ?"

"We had your husband's body taken away, Mrs. Lonergan. I'm terribly
sorry. I know it's a bad time, but I'd like to ask you a few
questions."

She looked at him, and her eyes suddenly filled with fear. The last
reaction Reese had expected. What was she afraid of?

"Your husband was working on a story, wasn't he?"

His voice echoed in her mind. "I'm on to something that's going to
blow everybody away and I mean people in high places. It's the most
exciting story I've ever been involved in."

"Mrs. Lonergan?"

"I I don't know anything,"

"You don't know what assignment he was working on?"

"No. Frank never discussed his work with me."

She was obviously lying.

"You have no idea who might have killed him?"

She looked around at the open drawers and cabinets. "It it must have
been a burglar."

Detective Reese and Detective Brown looked at each other.

"If you don't mind, I'd I'd like to be alone. This has been a terrible
shock."

"Of course. Is there anything we can do for you?"

"No. Just... just leave."

"We'll be back," Nick Reese promised.

When Detective Reese returned to police headquarters, he telephoned
Matt Baker. "I'm investigating the Frank Lonergan murder," Reese said.
"Can you tell me what he was working on?"

"Yes. Frank was investigating the Chloe Houston killing."

"I see. Did he file a story?"

"No. We were waiting for it, when " He stopped.

"Right. Thank you, Mr. Baker."

"If you get any information, will you let me know?"

"You'll be the first," Reese assured him.

The following morning, Dana Evans went into Tom Hawkins's office. "I
want to do a story on Frank's death. I'd like to go see his widow."

"Good idea. I'll arrange for a camera crew."

Late that afternoon, Dana and her camera crew pulled up in front of
Frank Lonergan's apartment building. With the crew following her, Dana
approached Lonergan's apartment door and rang the bell. This was the
kind of interview Dana dreaded. It was bad enough to show on
television the victims of horrible crimes, but to intrude on the grief
of the stricken families seemed even worse to her.

The door opened and Rita Lonergan stood there. "What do you ?" "I'm
sorry to bother you, Mrs. Lonergan. I'm Dana Evans, with WTE. We'd
like to get your reaction to " Rita Lonergan froze for a moment, and
then screamed, "You murderers!" She turned and ran inside the
apartment. Dana looked at the cameraman, shocked. "Wait here." She
went inside and found Rita Lonergan in the bedroom. "Mrs. Lonergan "
"Get out! You killed my husband!" Dana was puzzled. "What are you
talking about?" "Your people gave him an assignment so dangerous that

he made me leave town because he... he was afraid for my life." Dana
looked at her, appalled. "What what story was he working on?" "Frank
wouldn't tell me." She was fighting hysteria. "He said it was too too
dangerous. It was something big. He talked about the Pulitzer Prize
and the " She started to cry. Dana went over to her and put her arms
around her. "I'm so sorry. Did he say anything else?" "No. He said
I should get out, and he drove me to the train station. He was on his
way to see some some hotel clerk." "Where?" "At the Monroe Arms."

"I don't know why you're here, Miss Evans," Jeremy Robinson protested.
"Lonergan promised me that if I cooperated, there would be no bad
publicity about the hotel."

"Mr. Robinson, Mr. Lonergan is dead. All I want is some information."

Jeremy Robinson shook his head. "I don't know anything."

"What did you tell Mr. Lonergan?"

Robinson sighed. "He asked for the address of Carl Gorman, my hotel
clerk. I gave it to him."

"Did Mr. Lonergan go to see him?"

"I have no idea."

"I'd like to have that address."

Jeremy looked at her a moment and sighed again. "Very well. He lives
with his sister."

A few minutes later, Dana had the address in her hands. Robinson
watched her leave the hotel, and then he picked up the phone and dialed
the White House.

He wondered why they were so interested in the case.

Chris Colby, the department's computer expert, walked into Detective
Reese's office holding a floppy disk. He was almost trembling with
excitement. "What did you get?" Detective Reese asked. Chris Colby
took a deep breath. "This is going to blow your mind. Here's a
printout of what's on this disk."

Detective Reese started to read it and an incredulous expression came
over his face. "Mother of God," he said. "I've got to show this to
Captain Miller."

When Captain Otto Miller finished reading the printout, he looked up at
Detective Reese. "I I've never seen anything like this."

"There's never been anything like this," Detective Reese said. "What
the hell do we do with it?"

Captain Miller said slowly, "I think we have to turn it over to the
U.S. attorney general."

They were gathered in the office of Attorney General Barbara Gatlin.
With her in the room were Scott Brandon, director of the FBI; Dean
Bergstrom, the Washington chief of police; James Frisch, director of
Central Intelligence, and Edgar Graves, Chief Justice of the Supreme

Court. Barbara Gatlin said, "I asked you gentlemen here because I need
your advice. Frankly, I don't know how to proceed. We have a
situation that's unique. Frank Lonergan was a reporter for the
Washington Tribune. When he was killed, he was in the middle of an
investigation into the murder of Chloe Houston. I'm going to read you
a transcript of what the police found on a disk in Lonergan's car." She
looked at the printout in her hand and started to read aloud:

" "I have reason to believe that the President of the United States has
committed at least one murder and is involved in four more " "What?"
Scott Brandon exclaimed. "Let me go on." She started to read again.
" "I obtained the following information from various sources. Leslie
Stewart, the owner and publisher of the Washington Tribune, is willing
to swear that at one time, Oliver Russell tried to persuade her to take
an illegal drug called liquid Ecstasy. " "When Oliver Russell was
running for governor of Kentucky, Lisa Burnette, a legal secretary who
worked in the state capitol building, threatened to sue him for sexual
harassment. Russell told a colleague that he would have a talk with
her. The next day, Lisa Burnette's body was found in the Kentucky
River. She had died of an overdose of liquid Ecstasy. "
"Then-Governor Oliver Russell's secretary, Miriam Friedland, was found
unconscious on a park bench late at night. She was in a coma induced
by liquid Ecstasy. The police were waiting for her to come out of it

so that they could find out who had given it to her.
Oliver Russell
telephoned the hospital and suggested they take her off
life support.
Miriam Fried-land passed away without coming out of the
coma. " "Chloe
Houston was killed by an overdose of liquid Ecstasy. I
learned that on
the night of her death, there was a phone call from the
hotel suite to
the White House. When I looked at the hotel telephone
records to check
it, the page for that day was missing.

" "I was told that the president was at a meeting that
night, but I
discovered that the meeting had been canceled. No one
knows the
president's whereabouts that night. " "Paul Yerby was
detained as a
suspect in Chloe Houston's murder. Captain Otto Miller
told the White
House where Yerby was being held. The following morning
Yerby was
found hanging in his cell. He was supposed to have hanged
himself with
his belt, but when I looked through his effects at the
police station,
his belt was there, intact. " "Through a friend at the
FBI, I learned
that a blackmail letter had been sent to the White House.
President
Russell asked the FBI to check it for fingerprints. Most
of the letter
had been whited out, but with the aid of an infra scope
the FBI was
able to decipher it. " "The fingerprints on the letter
were identified
as belonging to Carl Gorman, a clerk at the Monroe Arms
Hotel, probably
the only one who might have known the identity of the
person who booked
the suite where the girl was killed. He was away at a
fishing camp,

but his name had been revealed to the White House. When I arrived at
the camp, Gorman had been killed in what appeared to be an accident. "
"There are too many connections for these killings to be a coincidence.
I am going ahead with the investigation, but frankly, I'm frightened.
At least I have this on the record, in case anything should happen to
me. More later." " "My God," James Frisch exclaimed. "This is ...
horrible." "I can't believe it." Attorney General Gatlin said,
"Lonergan believed it, and he was probably killed to stop this
information from getting out."

"What do we do now?" Chief Justice Graves asked. "How do you ask the
President of the United States if he's killed half a dozen people?"

"That's a good question. Impeach him? Arrest him? Throw him in
jail?"

"Before we do anything," Attorney General Gatlin said, "I think we have
to present this transcript to the president himself and give him an
opportunity to comment."

There were murmurs of agreement.

"In the meantime, I'll have a warrant for his arrest drawn up. Just in
case it's necessary."

One of the men in the room was thinking, I've got to inform Peter
Tager.

Peter Tager put the telephone down and sat there for a

long time,
thinking about what he had just been told. He rose and walked down the
corridor to Deborah Kanner's office. "I have to see the president."
"He's in a meeting. If you can " "I have to see him now, Deborah. It's
urgent." She saw the look on his face. "Just a moment." She picked
up the telephone and pressed a button. "I'm sorry to interrupt you,
Mr. President. Mr. Tager is here, and he said he must see you." She
listened a moment. "Thank you." She replaced the receiver and turned
to Tager. "Five minutes."

Five minutes later, Peter Tager was alone in the Oval Office with
President Russell.

"What's so important, Peter?"

Tager took a deep breath. "The Attorney General and the FBI think
you're involved in six murders."

Oliver smiled. "This is some kind of joke...."

"Is it? They're on their way here now. They believe you killed Chloe
Houston and "

Oliver had gone pale. "What?"

"I know it's crazy. From what I was told, all the evidence is
circumstantial. I'm sure you can explain where you were the night the
girl died."

Oliver was silent.

Peter Tager was waiting. "Oliver, you can explain, can't

you?"

Oliver swallowed. "No. I can't."

"You have to!"

Oliver said heavily, "Peter, I need to be alone."

Peter Tager went to see Senator Davis in the Capitol. "What is it
that's so urgent, Peter?" "It's it's about the president." "Yes?"
"The attorney general and the FBI think that Oliver is a murderer."

Senator Davis sat there staring at Tager. "What the hell are you
talking about?"

"They're convinced Oliver's committed several murders. I got a tip
from a friend at the FBI."

Tager told Senator Davis about the evidence.

When Tager was through, Senator Davis said slowly, "That dumb son of a
bitch! Do you know what this means?"

"Yes, sir. It means that Oliver "

"Fuck Oliver. I've spent years putting him where I want him. I don't
care what happens to him. I'm in control now, Peter. I have the
power. I'm not going to let Oliver's stupidity take it away from me.
I'm not going to let anyone take it away from me!"

"I don't see what you can "

"You said the evidence was all circumstantial?"

"That's right. I was told they have no hard proof. But

he has no
alibi."

"Where is the president now?"

"In the Oval Office."

"I've got some good news for him," Senator Todd Davis said.

Senator Davis was facing Oliver in the Oval Office. "I've been hearing
some very disturbing things, Oliver. It's insane, of course. I don't
know how anyone could possibly think you " "I don't, either. I haven't
done anything wrong, Todd."

"I'm sure you haven't. But if word got out that you were even
suspected of horrible crimes like these well, you can see how this
would affect the office, can't you?" "Of course, but " "You're too
important to let anything like this happen to you. This office
controls the world, Oliver. You don't want to give this up." "Todd
I'm not guilty of anything." "But they think you are. I'm told you
have no alibi for the evening of Chloe Houston's murder?" There was a
momentary silence. "No." Senator Davis smiled. "What happened to
your memory, son? You were with me that evening. We spent the whole
evening together." Oliver was looking at him, confused. "What?"
"That's right. I'm your alibi. No one's going to question my word. No
one. I'm going to save you, Oliver." There was a long silence.
Oliver said, "What do you want in return, Todd?" Senator Davis nodded.

"We'll start with the Middle Eastern peace conference. You'll call
that off. After that, we'll talk. I have great plans for us. We're
not going to let anything spoil them." Oliver said, "I'm going ahead
with the peace conference." Senator Davis's eyes narrowed. "What did
you say?" "I've decided to go ahead with it. You see, what's
important is not how long a president stays in this office, Todd, but
what he does when he's in it."

Senator Davis's face was turning red. "Do you know what you're doing?"
"Yes." The senator leaned across the desk. "I don't think you do.
They're on their way here to accuse you of murder, Oliver. Where are
you going to make your goddam deals from the penitentiary? You've just
thrown your whole life away, you stupid " A voice came over the
intercom. "Mr. President, there are some people here to see you.
Attorney General Gatlin, Mr. Brandon from the FBI, Chief Justice
Graves, and " "Send them in." Senator Davis said savagely, "It looks
like I should stick to judging horseflesh. I made a big mistake with
you, Oliver. But you just made the biggest mistake of your life. I'm
going to destroy you." The door opened and Attorney General Gatlin
entered, followed by Brandon, Justice Graves, and Bergstrom. Justice
Graves said, "Senator Davis ..." Todd Davis nodded curtly and strode
out of the room. Barbara Gatlin closed the door behind him. She
walked up to the desk. "Mr. President, this is highly embarrassing,

but I hope you will understand. We have to ask you some questions."
Oliver faced them. "I've been told why you're here. Of course, I had
nothing to do with any of those deaths." "I'm sure we're all relieved
to hear that, Mr. President," Scott Brandon said, "and I assure you
that none of us really believes that you could be involved. But an
accusation has been made, and we have no choice but to pursue it."

"I understand."

"Mr. President, have you ever taken the drug Ecstasy?"

"No."

The group looked at one another.

"Mr. President, if you could tell us where you were on October
fifteenth, the evening of Chloe Houston's death ..."

There was a silence.

"Mr. President?"

"I'm sorry. I can't."

"But surely you can remember where you were, or what you were doing on
that evening?"

Silence.

"Mr. President?"

"I I can't think right now. I'd like you to come back later."

"How much later?" Bergstrom asked.

"Eight o'clock."

Oliver watched them leave. He got up and slowly walked into the small
sitting room where Jan was working at a desk. She looked up as Oliver
entered.

He took a deep breath and said, "Jan, I I have a confession to make."

Senator Davis was in an icy rage. How could I have been so stupid? I
picked the wrong man. He's trying to destroy everything

I've worked for. I'll teach him what happens to people who try to
double-cross me. The Senator sat at his desk for a long time, deciding
what he was going to do. Then he picked up a telephone and dialed.

"Miss Stewart, you told me to call you when I had something more for
you."

"Yes, Senator?"

"Let me tell you what I want. From now on, I'll expect the full
support of the Tribune campaign contributions, glowing editorials, the
works."

"And what do I get in exchange for all this?" Leslie asked.

"The President of the United States. The attorney general has just
sworn out a warrant for his arrest for a series of murders."

There was a sharp intake of breath. "Keep talking."

Leslie Stewart was speaking so fast that Matt Baker could not
understand a word. "For God's sake, calm down," he said. "What are
you trying to say?" "The president! We've got him, Matt! I just
talked to Senator Todd Davis. The chief justice of the Supreme Court,
the chief of police, the director of the FBI, and the U.S. attorney
general are in the president's office now with a warrant for his arrest
on charges of murder. There's a pile of evidence against him, Matt,
and he has no alibi. It's the story of the goddam century!"

"You can't print it." She looked at him in surprise. "What do you
mean?" "Leslie, a story like this is too big to just I mean the facts
have to be checked and rechecked " "And rechecked again until it
becomes a headline in The Washington Post? No, thank you. I'm not
going to lose this one." "You can't accuse the President of the United
States of murder without " Leslie smiled. "I'm not going to, Matt. All
we have to do is print the fact that there is a warrant for his arrest.
That's enough to destroy him." "Senator Davis " " is turning in his
own son-in-law. He believes the president is guilty. He told me so."
"That's not enough. We'll verify it first, and " "With whom Katharine
Graham? Are you out of your mind? We run this right now, or we lose
it." "I can't let you do this, not without verifying everything that "
"Who do you think you're talking to? This is my paper, and I'll do
anything I like with it." Matt Baker rose. "This is

irresponsible. I
won't let any of my people write this story." "They don't have to.
I'll write it myself." "Leslie, if you do this, I'm leaving. For
good." "No, you're not, Matt. You and I are going to share a

Pulitzer Prize." She watched him turn and walk out of the office.
"You'll be back."

Leslie pressed down the intercom button. "Have Zoltaire come in
here."

She looked at him and said, "I want to know my horoscope for the next
twenty-four hours." "Yes, Miss Stewart. I'll be happy to do that."
From his pocket, Zoltaire took a small ephemeris, the astrological
bible, and opened it. He studied the positions of the stars and the
planets for a moment, and his eyes widened. "What is it?" Zoltaire
looked up. "I something very important seems to be happening." He
pointed to the ephemeris. "Look. Transiting Mars is going over your
ninth house Pluto for three days, setting off a square to your " "Never
mind that," Leslie said impatiently. "Cut to the chase." He blinked.
"The chase? Ah, yes." He looked at the book again. "There is some
kind of major event happening. You are in the middle of it. You're
going to be even more famous than you are now, Miss Stewart. The whole
world is going to know your name." Leslie was filled with a feeling of
intense euphoria. The whole world was going to know her name. She was

at the awards ceremonies and the speaker was saying, "And now, the
recipient of this year's Pulitzer Prize for the most important story in
newspaper history. I give you Miss Leslie Stewart." There was a
standing ovation, and the roar was deafening.

"Miss Stewart..."

Leslie shook away the dream.

"Will there be anything else?"

No," Leslie said. "Thank you, Zoltaire. That's enough."

At seven o'clock that evening, Leslie was looking at a proof of the
story she had written. The headline read: MURDER WARRANT

SERVED ON PRESIDENT RUSSELL. PRESIDENT ALSO TO BE QUESTIONED IN

INVESTIGATION OF SIX DEATHS.

Leslie skimmed her story under it and turned to Lyle Bannister, her
managing editor. "Run it," she said. "Put it out as an extra. I want
it to hit the streets in an hour, and WTE can broadcast the story at
the same time."

Lyle Bannister hesitated. "You don't think Matt Baker should take a
look at ?"

"This isn't his paper, it's mine. Run it. Now."

"Yes, ma'am." He reached for the telephone on Leslie's desk and dialed
a number. "We're going with it."

At seven-thirty that evening, Barbara Gatlin and the

others in the
group were preparing to return to the White House.
Barbara Gatlin said
heavily, "I hope to God it isn't going to be necessary to
use it, but
just to be prepared, I'm bringing the warrant for the
president's
arrest."

Thirty minutes later, Oliver's secretary said, "Attorney
General Gatlin
and the others are here." "Send them in." Oliver
watched, pale-faced,
as they walked into the Oval Office. Jan was at his side,
holding his
hand tightly. Barbara Gatlin said, "Are you prepared to
answer our
questions now, Mr. President?" Oliver nodded. "I am."
"Mr.
President, did Chloe Houston have an appointment to see
you on October
fifteenth?" "She did." "And did you see her?" "No. I
had to
cancel." The call had come in just before three o'clock.
"Darling,
it's me. I'm lonely for you. I'm at the lodge in
Maryland. I'm
sitting by the pool, naked." "We'll have to do something
about that."
"When can you get away?" "I'll be there in an hour."
Oliver turned to
face the group. "If what I'm about to tell you should ever
leave this
office, it would do irreparable damage to the presidency
and to our
relations with another country.

I'm doing this with the greatest reluctance, but you leave
me no
choice." As the group watched in wonder, Oliver walked
over to a side
door leading to a den and opened it. Sylva Picone stepped
into the
room. "This is Sylva Picone, the wife of the Italian

ambassador. On
the fifteenth, Mrs. Picone and I were together at her lodge in
Maryland from four o'clock in the afternoon until two o'clock in the
morning. I know absolutely nothing about the murder of Chloe Houston,
or any of the other deaths."

Twenty-One.

Dana walked into Tom Hawkins's office. "Tom, I'm on to something
interesting. Before Frank Lonergan was murdered, he went to the home
of Carl Gorman, a clerk who worked at the Monroe Arms. Gorman was
killed in a supposed boating accident. He lived with his sister. I'd
like to take a crew over there to do a taped segment for the
ten-o'clock news tonight." "You don't think it was a boating
accident?" "No. Too many coincidences." Tom Hawkins was thoughtful
for a moment. "Okay. I'll set it up." "Thanks. Here's the address.
I'll meet the camera crew there. I'm going home to change."

When Dana walked into her apartment, she had a sudden feeling that
something was wrong. It was a sense she had developed in Sarajevo, a
warning of danger. Somebody had been here. She walked through the
apartment slowly, warily checking the closets. Nothing was amiss. It's
my imagination, Dana told herself. But she did not believe it.

When Dana arrived at the house that Carl Gorman's sister lived in, the
electronic news-gathering vehicle had arrived and was

parked down the
street. The ENG was an enormous van with a large antenna on the roof
and sophisticated electronic equipment inside. Waiting for Dana were
Andrew Wright, the sound man and Vernon Mills, the cameraman. "Where
are we doing the interview?" Mills asked. "I want to do it inside the
house. I'll call you when we're ready." "Right." Dana went up to the
front door and knocked. Marianne Gorman opened the door. "Yes?" "I'm
" "Oh! I know who you are. I've seen you on television." "Right,"
Dana said. "Could we talk for a minute?" Marianne Gorman hesitated.
"Yes. Come in." Dana followed her into the living room.

Marianne Gorman offered Dana a chair. "It's about my brother, isn't
it? He was murdered. I know it." "Who killed him?" Marianne Gorman
looked away. "I don't know." "Did Frank Longergan come here to see
you?" The woman's eyes narrowed. "He tricked me. I told him where he
could find my brother and " Her eyes filled with tears. "Now Carl is
dead." "What did Lonergan want to talk to your brother about?" "He
said he was from the IRS." Dana sat there watching her. "Would you
mind if I did a brief television interview with you? You can just say
a few words about your brother's murder and how you feel about the
crime in this city." Marianne Gorman nodded. "I guess that will be
all right." "Thank you." Dana went to the front door, opened it, and
waved to Vernon Mills. He picked up his camera equipment and started
toward the house, followed by Andrew Wright. "I've never

done this
kind of thing before," Marianne said. "There's nothing to be nervous
about. It will only take a few minutes." Vernon entered the living
room with the camera. "Where do you want to shoot this?" "We'll do it
here, in the living room." She nodded toward a corner. "You can put
the camera there." Vernon placed the camera, then walked back to Dana.
He pinned a lavaliere microphone on each woman's jacket. "You can
turn it on whenever you're ready." He set it down on a table.
Marianne Gorman said, "No! Wait a minute! I'm sorry. I I can't do
this." "Why?" Dana asked. "It's ... it's dangerous. Could could I
talk to you alone?" "Yes." Dana looked at Vernon and Wright. "Leave
the camera where it is. I'll call you." Vernon nodded, "We'll be in
the van." Dana turned to Marianne Gorman. "Why is it dangerous for you
to be on television?" Marianne said reluctantly, "I don't want them to
see me." "You don't want who to see you?" Marianne swallowed. "Carl
did something he... he shouldn't have done. He was killed because of
it. And the men who killed him will try to kill me." She was
trembling. "What did Carl do?" "Oh, my God," Marianne moaned. "I
begged him not to." "Not to what?" Dana persisted. "He he wrote a
blackmail letter." Dana looked at her in surprise. "A blackmail
letter?" "Yes. Believe me, Carl was a good man. It's just that he
liked he had expensive tastes, and on his salary, he couldn't afford to
live the way he wanted to. I couldn't stop him. He was

murdered
because of that letter. I know it. They found him, and now they know
where I am. I'm going to be killed." She was sobbing. "I I don't
know what to do."

"Tell me about the letter." Marianne Gorman took a deep breath. "My
brother was going away on a vacation. He had forgotten a jacket that
he wanted to take with him, and he went back to the hotel. He got his
jacket and was back in his car in the garage when the private elevator
door to the Imperial Suite opened. Carl told me he saw a man get out.
He was surprised to see him there. He was even more surprised when the
man walked back to the elevator and wiped off his fingerprints. Carl
couldn't figure out what was going on. Then the the next day, he read
about that poor girl's murder, and he knew that this man had killed
her." She hesitated. "That's when he sent the letter to the White
House." Dana said slowly, "The White House?" "Yes." "Who did he send
the letter to?" "The man he saw in the garage. You know the one with
the eye patch. Peter Tager."

Twenty-Two.

Through the walls of the office, he could hear the sound of traffic on
Pennsylvania Avenue, outside the White House, and he became aware again
of his surroundings. He reviewed everything that was happening, and he
was satisfied that he was safe. Oliver Russell was going to be
arrested for murders he hadn't committed, and Melvin

Wicks, the vice
president, would become president. Senator Davis would
have no problem
controlling Vice President Wicks. And there's nothing to
link me to
any of the deaths, Tager thought. There was a prayer
meeting that
evening, and Peter Tager was looking forward to it. The
group enjoyed
hearing him talk about religion and power.

Peter Tager had become interested in girls when he was
fourteen. God
had given him an extraordinarily strong libido, and Peter
had thought
that the loss of his eye would make him unattractive to
the opposite
sex. Instead, girls found his eye patch intriguing. In
addition, God
had given Peter the gift of persuasion, and he was able to
charm
diffident young girls into the backseats of cars, into
barns, and into
beds. Unfortunately, he had gotten one of them pregnant
and had been
forced to marry her. She bore him two children. His
family could have
become an onerous burden, tying him down. But it turned
out to be a
marvelous cover for his extracurricular activities. He
had seriously
thought of going into the ministry, but then he had met
Senator Todd
Davis, and his life had changed. He had found a new and
bigger forum.
Politics.

In the beginning, there had been no problems with his
secret
relationships. Then a friend had given him a drug called
Ecstasy, and
Peter had shared it with Lisa Burnette, a fellow church
member in
Frankfort. Something had gone wrong, and she had died.

They found her
body in the Kentucky River. The next unfortunate incident
had occurred
when Miriam Friedland, Oliver Russell's secretary, had had
a bad
reaction and lapsed into a coma. Not my fault, Peter
Tager thought. It
had not harmed him. Miriam had obviously been on too many
other drugs.
Then, of course, there was poor Chloe Houston. He had run
into her in
a corridor of the White House where she was looking for a
rest room.
She had recognized him instantly and was impressed.
"You're Peter
Tager! I see you on television all the time." "Well, I'm
delighted.
Can I help you with something?" "I was looking for a
ladies' room."
She was young and very pretty. "There are no public rest
rooms in the
White House, miss." "Oh, dear." He said
conspiratorially, "I think I
can help you out. Come with me." He had led her upstairs
to a private
bathroom and waited outside for her. When she came out, he
asked, "Are
you just visiting Washington?" "Yes." "Why don't you let
me show you
the real Washington? Would you like that?" He could feel
that she was
attracted to him. "I I certainly would if it isn't too
much trouble."
"For someone as pretty as you? No trouble at all. We'll
start with
dinner tonight." She smiled. "That sounds exciting." "I
promise you
it will be. Now, you mustn't tell anyone we're meeting.
It's our
secret." "I won't. I promise." "I have a high-level
meeting with the
Russian government at the Monroe Arms Hotel tonight." He
could see
that she was impressed. "We can have dinner at the

Imperial Suite
there,

afterward. Why don't you meet me there about seven o'clock?" She
looked at him and nodded excitedly. "All right." He had explained to
her what she had to do to get inside the suite. "There won't be any
problem. Just call me to let me know you're there." And she had.

In the beginning, Chloe Houston had been reluctant. When Peter took
her in his arms, she said, "Don't. I I'm a virgin." That made him all
the more excited. "I don't want you to do anything you don't want to
do," he assured her. "We'll just sit and talk." "Are you
disappointed?" He squeezed her hand. "Not at all, my dear." He took
out a bottle of liquid Ecstasy and poured some into two glasses. "What
is that?" Chloe asked. "It's an energy booster. Cheers." He raised
his glass in a toast and watched as she finished the liquid in her
glass. "It's good," Chloe said. They had spent the next half hour
talking, and Peter had waited as the drug began to work. Finally, he
moved next to Chloe and put his arms around her, and this time there
was no resistance. "Get undressed," he said. "Yes."

Peter's eyes followed her into the bathroom, and he began to undress.
Chloe came out a few minutes later, naked, and he became excited at the
sight of her young, nubile body. She was beautiful. Chloe got into
bed beside him, and they made love. She was inexperienced, but the
fact that she was a virgin gave Peter the extra excitement

that he
needed. In the middle of a sentence, Chloe had sat up in bed, suddenly
dizzy. "Are you all right, my dear?" "I I'm fine. I just feel a
little " She held on to the side of the bed for a moment. "I'll be
right back." She got up. And as Peter watched, Chloe stumbled, fell,
and smashed her head against the sharp corner of the iron table.
"Chloe!" He leaped out of bed and hurried to her side. "Chloe!" He
could feel no pulse. Oh, God, he thought. How could you do this to
me? It wasn't my fault. She slipped. He looked around. They mustn't
trace me to this suite. He had quickly gotten dressed, gone into the
bathroom, moistened a towel, and begun polishing the surfaces of every
place he might have touched. He picked up Chloe's purse, looked around
to make sure there were no signs that he had been there, and took the
elevator down to the garage. The last thing he had done was to wipe
his fingerprints off the elevator buttons. When Paul Yerby had
surfaced as a threat, Tager had used his connections to dispose of him.
There was no way anyone could connect Tager to Chloe's death.

And then the blackmail letter had come. Carl Gorman, the hotel clerk,
had seen him. Peter had sent Sime to get rid of Gorman, telling him
that it was to protect the president. That should have been the end of
the problem. But Frank Lonergan had started asking questions, and it
had been necessary to dispose of him, too. Now there was another nosy

reporter to deal with. So there were only two threats left: Marianne
Gorman and Dana Evans. And Sime was on his way to kill them both.

Twenty-Three.

Marianne Gorman repeated, "You know the one with the eye patch. Peter
Tager." Dana was stunned. "Are you sure?" "Well, it's hard not to
recognize someone who looks like that, isn't it?" "I need to use your
phone." Dana hurried over to the telephone and dialed Matt Baker's
number. His secretary answered. "Mr. Baker's office." "It's Dana.
I have to talk to him. It's urgent." "Hold on, please." A moment
later, Matt Baker was on the line. "Dana is anything wrong?"

She took a deep breath. "Matt, I just found out who was with Chloe
Houston when she died." "We know who it was. It was " "Peter Tager."
"What?" It was a shout. "I'm with the sister of Carl Gorman, the
hotel clerk who was murdered. Carl Gorman saw Tager wiping his
fingerprints off the elevator in the hotel garage the night Chloe
Houston died. Gorman sent Tager a blackmail letter, and I think Tager
had him murdered. I have a camera crew here. Do you want me to go on
the air with this?" "Don't do anything right now!" Matt ordered.
"I'll handle it. Call me back in ten minutes." He slammed down the
receiver and headed for the White Tower. Leslie was in her office.
"Leslie, you can't print " She turned and held up the mock-up of the

headline: MURDER WARRANT SERVED ON PRESIDENT RUSSELL. "Look at this,
Matt." Her voice was filled with exaltation. "Leslie I have news for
you. There's " "This is all the news I need." She nodded smugly. "I
told you you'd come back. You couldn't stay away, could you? This was
just too big to walk away from, wasn't it, Matt? You need me. You'll
always need me." He stood there, looking at her, wondering: What
happened to turn her into this kind of woman? It's still not too late
to save her. "Leslie "

"Don't be embarrassed because you made a mistake," Leslie said
complacently. "What did you want to say?" Matt Baker looked at her
for a long time. "I wanted to say goodbye, Leslie." She watched him
turn and walk out the door.

Twenty-Three.

Wlat's going to happen to me?" Marianne Gorman asked. "Don't worry,"
Dana told her. "You'll be protected." She made a quick decision.
"Marianne, we're going to do a live interview, and I'll turn the tape
of it over to the FBI. As soon as we finish the interview, I'll get
you away from here." Outside, there was the sound of a car screaming
to a stop. Marianne hurried over to the window. "Oh, my God!" Dana
moved to her side. "What is it?" Sime Lombardo was getting out of the
car. He looked at the house, then headed toward the door. Marianne
stammered, "That's the the other man who was here asking about Carl,

the day Carl was killed. I'm sure he had something to do with his
murder."

Dana picked up the phone and hastily dialed a number.

"Mr. Hawkins's office."

"Nadine, I have to talk to him right away."

"He's not in. He should be back in about "

"Let me talk to Nate Erickson."

Nate Erickson, Hawkins's assistant, came on the phone. "Dana?"

"Nate I need help fast. I have a breaking news story. I want you to
put me on live, immediately."

"I can't do that," Erickson protested. "Tom would have to authorize
it."

"There's no time for that," Dana exploded.

Outside the window, Dana saw Sime Lombardo moving toward the front
door.

In the news van, Vernon Mills looked at his watch. "Are we going to do
this interview or not? I have a date."

Inside the house, Dana was saying, "It's a matter of life and death,
Nate. You've got to put me on live. For God's sake, do it now!" She
slammed the receiver down, stepped over to the television set, and
turned it on Channel Six. A soap opera was in progress. An older man
was talking to a young woman.

"You never really understood me, did you, Kristen?" "The truth is that
I understand you too well. That's why I want a divorce, George." "Is
there someone else?" Dana hurried into the bedroom and turned on the
set there. Sime Lombardo was at the front door. He knocked. "Don't
open it," Dana warned Marianne. Dana checked to make sure that her
microphone was live. The knocking at the door became louder. "Let's
get out of here," Marianne whispered. "The back " At that moment, the
front door splintered open and Sime charged into the room. He closed
the door behind him and looked at the two women. "Ladies. I see that
I have both of you." Desperately, Dana glanced toward the television
set. "If there is someone else, it's your fault, George." "Perhaps I
am at fault, Kristen." Sime Lombardo took a .22 caliber semiautomatic
pistol out of his pocket and started screwing a silencer onto the
barrel. "No!" Dana said. "You can't " Sime raised the gun. "Shut
up. Into the bedroom go on." Marianne mumbled, "Oh, my God!" "Listen
..." Dana said. "We can " "I told you to shut up. Now move." Dana
looked at the television set.

"I've always believed in second chances, Kristen. I don't want to lose
what we had what we could have again." The same voices echoed from the
television set in the bedroom. Sime commanded, "I told you two to
move! Let's get this over with." As the two panicky women took a
tentative step toward the bedroom, the red light on the

camera in the
corner suddenly turned on. The images of Kristen and George faded from
the screen and an announcer's voice said, "We interrupt this program to
take you now live to a breaking story in the Whea-ton area." As the
soap opera faded, the Gorman living room suddenly appeared on the
screen. Dana and Marianne were in the foreground, Sime in the
background. Sime stopped, confused, as he saw himself on the
television set. "What what the hell is this?" In the van, the
technicians watched the new image flash on the screen. "My God,"
Vernon Mills said. "We're live!" Dana glanced at the screen and
breathed a silent prayer. She turned to face the camera. "This is
Dana Evans coming to you live from the home of Carl Gorman, who was
murdered a few days ago. We're interviewing a man who has some
information about his murder." She turned to face him. "So would you
like to tell us exactly what happened?" Lombardo stood there,
paralyzed, watching himself on the screen, licking his lips. "Hey!"
From the television set, he heard himself say, "Hey!"

and he saw his image move, as he swung toward Dana. "What what the
hell are you doing? What kind of trick is this?"

"It's not a trick. We're on the air, live. There are two million
people watching us."

Lombardo saw his image on the screen and hastily put the gun back into
his pocket.

Dana glanced at Marianne Gorman, then looked Sime Lombardo square in
the eye. "Peter Tager is behind the murder of Carl Gorman, isn't
he?"

In the Daly Building, Nick Reese was in his office when an assistant
rushed in. "Quick! Take a look at this! They're at Gorman's house."
He turned the television set to Channel Six, and the picture flashed on
the screen.

"Did Peter Tager tell you to kill Carl Gorman?"

"I don't know what you're talking about. Turn that damned television
set off before I "

"Before you what? Are you going to kill us in front of two million
people?"

"Jesus!" Nick Reese shouted. "Get some patrol cars out there,
fast!"

In the Blue Room in the White House, Oliver and Jan were watching
station WTE, stunned. "Peter?" Oliver said slowly. "I can't believe
it!"

Peter Tager's secretary hurried into his office. "Mr. Tager, I think
you had better turn on Channel Six." She gave him a nervous look and
hurried out again. Peter Tager looked after her, puzzled. He picked
up the remote and pressed a button, and the television set came to
life.

Dana was saying, "... and was Peter Tager also responsible for the
death of Chloe Houston?"

"I don't know anything about that. You'll have to ask Tager."

Peter Tager looked at the television set unbelievingly. This can't be
happening! God wouldn't do this to me! He sprang to his feet and
hurried toward the door. I'm not going to let them get me. I'll hide!
And then he stopped. Where? Where can I hide? He walked slowly back
to his desk and sank into a chair. Waiting.

In her office, Leslie Stewart was watching the interview, in shock.
Peter Tager? No! No! No! No! Leslie snatched up the phone and
pressed a number. "Lyle, stop that story! It must not go out! Do you
hear me? It " Over the phone she heard him say, "Miss Stewart, the
papers hit the streets half an hour ago. You said..." Slowly, Leslie
replaced the receiver. She looked at the headline of the Washington
Tribune: MURDER WARRANT SERVED

ON PRESIDENT RUSSELL.

Then she looked up at the framed front page on the wall:

DEWEY DEFEATS TRUMAN.

"You're going to be even more famous than you are now, Miss Stewart.
The whole world is going to know your name."

Tomorrow she would be the laughingstock of the world.

At the Gorman home, Sime Lombardo took one last, frantic look at
himself on the television screen and said, "I'm getting out of here."
He hurried to the front door and opened it. Half a dozen squad cars
were screaming to a stop outside.

Twenty-Four.

Jeff Connors was at Dulles International Airport with Dana, waiting for
Kemal's plane to arrive. "He's been through hell," Dana explained
nervously. "He he's not like other little boys. I mean don't be
surprised if he doesn't show any emotion." She desperately wanted Jeff
to like Kemal. Jeff sensed her anxiety. "Don't worry, darling. I'm
sure he's a wonderful boy." "Here it comes!" They looked up and
watched the small speck in the sky grow larger and larger until it
became a shining 747. Dana squeezed Jeffs hand tightly. "He's
here."

The passengers were deplaning. Dana watched anxiously as they exited
one by one. "Where's ?"

And there he was. He was dressed in the outfit that Dana had bought
him in Sarajevo, and his face was freshly washed. He came down the
ramp slowly, and when he saw Dana, he stopped. The two of them stood
there, motionless, staring at each other. And then they were running
toward each other, and Dana was holding him, and his good arm was
squeezing her tightly, and they were both crying.

When Dana found her voice, she said, "Welcome to America, Kemal."

He nodded. He could not speak.

"Kemal, I want you to meet my friend. This is Jeff Connors."

Jeff leaned down. "Hello, Kemal. I've been hearing a lot about
you."

Kemal clung to Dana fiercely.

"You'll be coming to live with me," Dana said. "Would you like
that?"

Kemal nodded. He would not let go of her.

Dana looked at her watch. "We have to leave. I'm covering a speech at
the White House."

It was a perfect day. The sky was a deep, clear blue, and a cooling
breeze was blowing in from the Potomac River. They stood in the Rose
Garden, with three dozen other television and newspaper reporters.
Dana's camera was focused on the president, who stood on a podium with
Jan at his side. President Oliver Russell was saying, "I have an
important announcement to make. At this moment, there is a meeting of
the heads of state of the United Arab Emirates, Libya, Iran, and Syria,
to discuss a lasting peace treaty with Israel. I received word this
morning that the meeting is going extremely well and that the treaty
should be signed within the next day or two. It is of the utmost

importance that the Congress of the United States solidly
support us in
helping this vital effort." Oliver turned to the man
standing next to
him. "Senator Todd Davis." Senator Davis stepped up to
the
microphone, wearing his trademark white suit and white,
broad-brimmed
leghorn hat, beaming at the crowd. "This is truly a
historic moment in
the history of our great country. For many years, as you
know, I have
been striving to bring about peace between Israel and the
Arab
countries. It has been a long and difficult task, but now,
at last,
with the help and guidance of our wonderful president, I
am happy to
say that our efforts are finally coming to fruition." He
turned to
Oliver. "We should all congratulate our great president
on the
magnificent part he has played in helping us to bring this
about...."
Dana was thinking, One war is coming to an end. Perhaps
this is a
beginning. Maybe one day we'll have a world where adults
learn to
settle their probkms with love instead of hate, a world
where children
can grow up without ever hearing the obscene sounds of
bombs and
machine-gunfire, without fear of their limbs being torn
apart by
faceless strangers. She turned to look at Kemal, who was
excitedly
whispering to Jeff. Dana smiled. Jeff had proposed to
her. Kemal
would have a father. They were going to be a family. How
did I get so
lucky? Dana wondered. The speeches were winding down.
The cameraman
swung the camera away from the podium and moved into a
close-up of

Dana. She looked into the lens. "This is Dana Evans, reporting for
WTE, Washington, D.C."

SIDNEY SHELDON is the author of The Other Side of Midnight, A Stranger
in the Mirror, Bloodline, Rage of Angels, Master of the Game, If
Tomorrow Comes, Windmills of the Gods, The Sands of Time, Memories of
Midnight, The Doomsday Conspiracy, The Stars Shine Down, Nothing Lasts
Forever and Morning, Noon & Night, all international bestsellers. His
first book, The Naked Face, was acclaimed by the New York Times as 'the
best first mystery novel of the year'. Mr. Sheldon has won a Tony
Award for Broadway's Redhead and an Academy Award for The Bachelor and
the Bobby Soxer. Most of his number one bestsellers have been made
into highly successful theatrical films or television mini series.

He has written the screenplays for twenty-three motion pictures,
including Easter Parade (with Judy Garland) and Annie Get Your Gun. He
also created four long-running television series, including Hart to
Hart and I Dream ofJeannie, which he produced. In 1993 he was awarded
the Prix Litteraire de Deauville, from the Deauville Film Festival, and
he is now in the Guinness Book of Records as "The Most Translated
Author'. Mr. Sheldon and his wife live in southern California.